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THE CHRISTIAN TRAINING
AND CONVERSION
OF
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS.

BEING SELECTIONS FROM THE
MANUSCRIPTS AND LETTERS
OF THE LATE
REV. SAMUEL JACKSON.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,
BY
THOMAS JACKSON.

I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring. (Isaiah xlv. 3.)
The promise is unto you, and to your children. (Acts ii. 39.)

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To the Wesleyan Ministers, Wesleyan Sunday-school and Day-school Teachers, Wesleyan Fathers and Mothers, and Wesleyan Class-Leaders, at home and abroad, this volume, declarative of the deep religious yearnings of my late honoured brother, is respectfully inscribed by their friend and servant,

THOMAS JACKSON.

LONDON, *November 25th*, 1862.

INTRODUCTION.

THE contents of this little volume are diversified in their character; but they all bear indubitable evidence of the writer's intense solicitude for the spiritual interests of the children and young people connected with the families, schools, and congregations of Methodism. They are published in the hope that the perusal of them will lead many Methodists not only to adopt his views, but also to imbibe his spirit, and to carry on the work upon which his heart was set, and in which he laboured with patient perseverance for many years. The "addresses" were delivered on various occasions, principally to gatherings of Sunday-school friends. The "extracts" are taken from numerous manuscripts, written after he had retired from the active duties of the ministry, and left by him in his study,—touching memorials of his habitual thoughts and meditations. The "letters" are selected from his correspondence with his brother Robert, who was employed for several years in visiting the Sunday-schools in various parts of the kingdom, endeavouring to carry Samuel's views into practical effect, which he did with encouraging success.

Though not written nor prepared by the author himself for publication, the following pages may be regarded as containing the final results of an amount of patient thought and careful observation

rarely bestowed on the subject, which yet is second to none in importance. They express his latest sentiments concerning the evangelization of Methodist children ; and every sentence was well weighed before it was committed to writing. The volume is therefore commended to the earnest attention of the Methodist people ; in trust that the suggestions which it contains will be seriously considered, and put to the test of actual experiment.

It will be perceived that the writer had a deep and abiding conviction of the universal sinfulness of mankind, entailed upon them in consequence of the original transgression, committed in the garden of Eden, and of their consequent misery and danger ; and that he had a conviction, no less deep, that God willeth all men to be saved,—that Christ died for the redemption of every soul of man,—that for His sake a day of grace is granted to all, without exception,—and that special facilities are afforded to the baptized children of Christian parents for obtaining the salvation which is by Christ Jesus with eternal glory ; inasmuch as they are placed in a near and distinct relation to the God of all grace.

When God entered into covenant with Abraham and his seed, engaging to be a God to them, He directed that their male children, in their several generations, should receive the sacrament of circumcision in their infancy, and thus be recognised as members of His church. When Christ, to whom all power is given in heaven and upon earth, introduced the evangelical dispensation, He changed

the sacrament of admission into His church, by substituting baptism for circumcision; but He did not disinherit the children of His people of the gracious right of church-membership, which they had enjoyed from the time of Abraham: and if He has not disinherited them, that right still remains with them. Hence the Divine authority of infant baptism, by which that gracious right is solemnly recognised; and hence also the fact, that the children of Christians have generally been baptized in their infancy, from the apostolic times to this day.

Provision was made for the religious instruction of Abraham's posterity who had been circumcised, so that when they arrived at years of discretion, they might, by their own voluntary act, ratify what had been done for them in their infancy, by claiming the blessings of God's covenant, and submitting to all its conditions. Such an instructor was Abraham himself; of whom God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." (Gen xviii. 19.) Circumcision was the seal of God's covenant with Abraham: and the patriarch endeavoured, by means of religious and moral instruction, to carry into practical effect the design of that holy sacrament; aware that, unless the conditions of the covenant were fulfilled by the people, its blessings would not be given by Almighty God.

When further revelations of the Divine will were made to Abraham's posterity in the time of Moses, in order that the design of their circumcision might be answered He made provision for their early instruction, and gave express command that His law should be explained to the people in their successive generations with all diligence and fidelity. "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. vi. 6, 7.) "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law." (Deut. xxxii. 46.) "For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." (Psalm lxxviii. 5-7.)

This duty would, in the first instance, devolve upon the parents, to whose care children, in their earliest years, are specially committed; and a beautiful instance of pious fidelity in the fulfilment of this sacred trust in a Hebrew family we have in the case of Timothy. His father was a Greek; but

his mother was a Jewess, in whom there dwelt an "unfeigned faith," as well as in his grandmother; and under the teaching of these godly women Timothy "from a child" knew "the holy Scriptures," and was thus prepared for the course of evangelical instruction which God in His merciful providence had prepared for him. (Acts xvi. 1; 2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15.) At an earlier period the mother of "king Lemuel" acted a similar part with respect to "the son of her vows;" warning him of his temptations and dangers, and urging him to the performance of his duties, in language of tender affection. (Prov. xxxi. 1-9.) Pious fathers, also, belonging to the Hebrew race, were no less observant of their duty with respect to their children, who bore in their persons the seal of God's covenant. In this light we regard David's address to his successor upon the throne of Israel: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever," notwithstanding thy circumcision. (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.) The wise instructions given by Solomon, in the character of a father, form a very important part of holy Scripture; (Prov. i., ii., iii., iv., v., vi., vii. ;) and his directions to parents, as to the religious and moral treatment of their children, are copious and explicit. (Prov. xiii. 24; xix. 18; xxii. 15; xxiii. 13; xxix. 15,

17.) "Train up a child in the way he should go;" or, as the marginal rendering is, "Catechise a child in his way:" "and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. xxii. 6.)

Next to the parents, the religious and moral instruction of the children of God's covenant people was assigned to the Priests and Levites, who had no inheritance in the Holy Land, but were supported by the tithes of the other tribes. They performed the sacrificial rites of the sanctuary in stated companies, and in regular order; but were otherwise scattered through the country, where they had their family-residences. They were required to study the law with care; and to them the people generally were directed to look for instruction in all matters of duty. They were appointed to "teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken unto them by the hand of Moses." (Lev. x. 11.) It was said, "The law shall not perish from the Priest." (Jer. xviii. 18.) "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ask now the Priests concerning the law." (Hag. ii. 11.) "The Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and" the people "should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.) The pious King "Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord." (2 Chron. xxx. 22.)

Right practice is the end of all teaching; and in this manner Almighty God provided for the religious instruction of His ancient people, that by

a practical compliance with His will they might secure to themselves the enjoyment of all the blessings which He had promised, and of which their circumcision was the pledge.

A similar state of things exists, by Divine appointment, under the Gospel dispensation. The right of church-membership is conferred by God upon the children of His people, even in the time of infancy; and to the enjoyment of that right they are admitted by baptism, which Christ, as the Lord of all, has substituted for circumcision. Baptism, therefore, is not only a symbol of spiritual purification, but a covenanting transaction; being, on the part of God, a pledge and token of His faithfulness in the fulfilment of His gracious promises; and, on the part of Christian parents, a pledge and token of their assent to the covenant of God; so that, while they claim for their children the promised blessings of His salvation, they solemnly engage to bring up their children to serve and obey Him.

The children who are thus dedicated to God are entitled to a course of Christian instruction, which it is a great sin to withhold from them: and when they come to years of discretion, they are bound, as the creatures of God, and the purchase of Christ's redeeming blood, to fulfil their baptismal obligations, by a personal surrender of themselves to God, in penitence and faith unfeigned, in a course of evangelical obedience, and by a formal recognition of their church-membership. The duty of

forming their character, as the disciples of Christ, devolves, in the first instance, as in the Hebrew church, upon their parents; and hence the apostolic command: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" (Eph. vi. 4;) "in the instruction and discipline of the Lord," as Mr. Wesley renders the Apostle's words; evidently meaning that Christian parents should impart to their children sound Christian knowledge, and form their habits accordingly; restraining them from sin, teaching them how to pray, and securing their attendance upon the public worship of God. This is to be done, not with repulsiveness and severity, but with gentleness and tender affection; "not provoking" the "children to wrath," but giving them to feel that "the yoke" of Christ "is easy," and His "burden is light." In a beautiful "hymn for parents," the venerable Charles Wesley teaches them to sing,—

"We would persuade their hearts to' obey;
With mildest zeal proceed;
And never take the harsher way
When love will do the deed."

But the training of baptized children is not to be left entirely in the hands of their parents: for, if such children are members of the church; if Christ's Ministers are the Pastors of the church, whose duty it is to administer the sacred ordinance; then is every baptized child unquestionably com-

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prehended in their charge, and has a just claim upon their pastoral attention. In this view, it is apprehended, such texts as the following are to be understood: they have a reference to baptized children, as well as to the adult members of the church:—"Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Acts xx. 28.) "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." (1 Peter v. 2.) The duty of teaching the disciples of Christ, and of feeding the lambs of His flock, as well as His sheep, He charged upon His Apostles; and in the fulfilment of their task He assured them of His constant presence and aid. (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; John xxi. 15—17.) The ordinary Ministers of Christ have succeeded to this part of the apostolic work, and are therefore said to "watch for souls, as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) They are appointed to "take care of the church of God," not excepting any of its members, either young or old. (1 Tim. iii. 5.)

It does not, then, appear how the Ministers and Pastors of the church can be said to execute the trust which they have received from Him who says, "All souls are Mine," unless they have regular intercourse with the baptized children of their charge, giving them Christian instruction, warning,

and encouragement; inquiring into their progress in sacred knowledge; solemnly questioning them as to their religious desires and purposes; guarding them against the evils to which they are exposed; helping them forward in the ways of God; praying with them; and endeavouring, by every means, to prepare them for a regular, intelligent, and devout attendance upon the Lord's supper, for religious intercourse with the adult members of the church; and, in one word, to bring them to the enjoyment of God's forgiving mercy, to the celebration of His spiritual worship, and to the practice of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." This may appear to some persons a hopeless task, with respect to a vast majority of baptized children, considering the levity and heedlessness of youth, the ignorance and carelessness of many parents, and the temptations to sin which everywhere abound. But the grace of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to overcome every form of evil that lies in the way; and that grace will be freely vouchsafed in answer to the earnest, united, and persevering prayers of Christian people. If infant baptism be indeed a Divine ordinance, it must be possible to prevail upon the majority of baptized children, at least, voluntarily, and in early life, to unite themselves to Christ and His people. A thousand examples of genuine youthful piety demonstrate the sufficiency of Divine grace, and clearly prove that mankind in very early life are as capable of true religion as they are in adult age. But,

whatever may be the issue, the servants of Christ are solemnly charged to "take heed unto ALL THE FLOCK," young and old, "over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers."

The generality of children being of tender age at the time of their baptism, (like the candidates for circumcision in the Hebrew church,) must, of course, at first be considered as in their novitiate, and in the state of pupilage; but, when they attain to years of discretion, it is their high privilege and imperative duty to pass from this condition to the state of voluntary church-membership, by an open and avowed compliance with the terms of the Christian covenant; receiving Christ as their Saviour from sin, submitting to His authority, seeking religious fellowship with spiritually-minded Christians, resolving, in the strength of Divine grace, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, and ratifying all at the table of the Lord, by eating of the sacramental bread, and drinking of the sacramental cup.

This is the end of infant baptism, and of all Christian training; and to bring children and young persons to this surrender of themselves to their Lord and Saviour should be the ceaseless endeavour of Christian parents, of Christian teachers, and especially of the Pastors of the church, to whom the charge is given, "Feed My lambs." They belong to Christ; He claims them for His own; and He will ere long institute a strict inquiry as to the manner in which His

charge has been fulfilled. The task of preparing baptized children for voluntary church-membership, in the sense just explained, may, in several instances, be a very trying process, and require years of anxious toil: but it is a task that must be undertaken and accomplished; and the grace of Christ is sufficient to enable those upon whom He lays the burden to overcome every difficulty. Nor ought they to forget that the object to be gained is worth all the labour that can by possibility be expended upon it. The object is connected with the great scheme of redemption; it is the fulfilment of the will and command of Christ; it is a work in the furtherance of which the Holy Spirit puts forth His gracious operations, and which angels contemplate with delight. Success in this work will people earth with holy men and women, as well as secure the everlasting happiness of human beings, for whom the Saviour died. Whatever may be the fickleness, the levity, the indecision, the frequent relapses, of particular children, all may be overcome by prayer and patience; for those who are engaged in the service are "workers together with" God, and they will finally resign their charge to Him "with exceeding joy." If Christians are to "be patient toward all men," they are specially bound to be patient towards the junior members of the church, whom "the good Shepherd" regards as His "lambs," and whom He carries in His bosom.

Ministers, when in the pulpit, it is thought, ought not to forget the presence and claims of the rising

race, who form a considerable part of every Christian assembly, especially in the morning of the Lord's day. They accompany their fathers and mothers to the house of God, certainly not as heathens, nor as mere spectators, but as the juvenile members of the church; and, from the hands of the men whom the Lord hath made rulers over His house, they are entitled to receive "their portion of meat in due season:" nor can it be withheld from them but by an act of direct injustice. It is no dishonour to the most eloquent, learned, and gifted Preacher to be "a teacher of babes," as well as of full-grown men; for even "babes" in age and knowledge are found in the "household" of which the "stewards" of Christ have the charge. A few sentences of a sermon, addressed directly to the children and young people present, containing a kind but direct appeal to their understandings and consciences, on the subject under discussion, will often produce the happiest effect. It serves to awaken their attention; it shows that they are cared for; it reminds parents of their duty; and it will furnish a subject of profitable conversation with them when the service is ended. St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," addresses himself with special tenderness and affection, to a class of persons whom he terms "little children," as well as to others whom he calls "young men," and "fathers;" and St. John knew the mind of his Lord.

Many are the appliances now used for the intellectual, moral, and religious benefit of the rising

generation ; such as Sunday and day schools, Bible classes, Catechumen classes, &c. ; but what appears to be wanted is a general and practical recognition of baptized children as members of the church of God, accompanied by combined efforts on the part of Ministers and adult Christians, to claim them for the Lord Christ, and by a direct and solemn appeal to their consciences to bring them to a personal surrender of themselves to Him : for it is a sad but undeniable fact, that many persons who have been baptized, and have passed through Sunday-schools, are practical heathens in this professedly Christian land ; being habitual neglecters of public worship, and, in not a few instances, addicted to the practice of open sin : a proof that, with respect to a large proportion of them, their consciences were never thoroughly awakened in childhood ; they were never made truly to feel their subjection to the Divine authority ; they have therefore regarded religion rather as a theory, than as the great business of life, the neglect of which will certainly be followed by misery indescribable and endless.

We believe that the true and efficient remedy for this lamentable state of things will only be found in strengthening the ministry which Christ has ordained in His church. The most zealous and self-denying Ministers are but men, whose powers are limited ; and it is impossible for those who have to visit the sick, to superintend the various charities of the church, and to preach to intelligent congregations two or three times on the Sunday, and, almost every evening in the week besides, to pay

due attention to all the children and young people belonging to their charge. Baxter describes a disadvantage under which Ministers in his time laboured, and of which he said "few take notice." It is, said he, "the fewness of Ministers, and the greatness of the congregations. In the Apostles' times every church had a multitude of Ministers; and so it must be again, or we shall never come near the primitive pattern: and then they could preach publicly and from house to house. But now, when there is but one or two Ministers to many thousand souls, we cannot so much as know them, much less teach them one by one. It is as much as we can do to discharge the public work." *

It is observable, that, according to the New Testament, the Apostles never committed a church to the pastoral care of one man only, but always to an indefinite number of men, who are denominated indifferently Pastors, Elders, and Bishops; so that due attention might be paid to all classes of persons, young and aged, and the work of God extended to those "that are without," in the neighbourhood, and in the surrounding country. Until the Methodists are able to make their ecclesiastical arrangements on a plan equally extensive, it is infinitely desirable that the adult members of the church should regard baptized children as an integral part of their body, by Christ's ordination and will; and that from among themselves suitable persons should be formally appointed to assist the pastorate in dealing with the

* *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, part iii., sect. 13.

consciences of children and young people; pressing upon their attention the claims of Christ, who redeemed them by His blood,—who has placed them in His church by baptism,—whose will is their salvation,—who invites them to His arms,—who requires of them a right use of their religious advantages,—and who will ere long summon them to His bar, and will for ever punish those who refuse to comply with His will. Such appeals, made in the spirit of mingled kindness and fidelity, accompanied by earnest prayer to God for the grace of His Holy Spirit, and in full reliance upon Him for success, must be followed by salutary effects. The official appointment of such persons, in every Circuit of Methodism, is at present a pressing need, and would doubtless add, yearly, thousands of candidates to the Societies; who, being brought to God in early life, would make good and useful Christians.

To a member of the Jewish church, who was satisfied merely with its outward rites, St. Paul said, "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." (Rom. ii. 25.) In other words, the disobedient Jew placed himself on an equality with a heathen man; but with this aggravation of his guilt, that he sinned against greater light than a mere heathen ever had, and violated obligations under which a heathen was never placed. With equal truth we may say to a baptized sinner, "Baptism verily profiteth, if thou obey the law of Christ: but if thou be a breaker of

that law, thy baptism is made unbaptism,"—if we may coin a word for the occasion,—“so that thou assumest the character of a Jew or a Pagan, and must take thy place among those whom God will for ever disown and punish.” And shall the junior members of the church pass by tens of thousands from the baptismal font to perdition, and no combined and energetic efforts be put forth to convert and save them? Were the vast body of baptized children to be so dealt with as to become spiritual and upright Christians, or truly to fear God, how would the face of society be changed, the influence of the church be strengthened, Missionary operations extended, existing systems of sin and error overthrown, and the conversion of the world to Christ be rapidly hastened!

“ But who sufficient is to lead
And execute the vast design ? ”

May God, in the tenderness of His mercy, awaken attention to the subject, supply the required agency, and render it successful by sending the Holy Spirit, in the fulness of His convincing and regenerating power, upon the children and youth of Methodism; till they shall all as with one voice exclaim, “COME, AND LET US JOIN OURSELVES TO THE LORD IN A PERPETUAL COVENANT THAT SHALL NOT BE FORGOTTEN ! ”

London, November 10th, 1862.

ADDRESSES

ON THE

CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

ADDRESS I.

THE CASE OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN WHO ARE
UNCONVERTED.

SOME of the servants of Christ are employed in conducting Foreign Missions, some in conducting Home Missions, and others in the evangelical training of little children. All these modes of spreading the Gospel are expressly sanctioned by the Lord Jesus. He sanctioned the principle of our Foreign Missions when He sent St. Paul to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." He sanctioned the principle of Home Missions when He directed St. James to say to the Christians of his own age, "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way

shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Our blessed Lord also sanctioned the principle of modern religious schools when He instructed St. Paul to order that the children of Christian parents should be "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Yet it has been a subject of debate, both at home and abroad, whether it is the wisest and the best,—the most acceptable to God, and the most profitable to men,—to make known the Gospel, first of all, to adults, or to children. But as God has commanded it to be published to all, both young and old, it is of little importance with which of these classes we begin, or whether we teach it to both at one and the same time, provided we do but honestly endeavour to fulfil the Divine intentions, according to our circumstances, and as we have opportunity.

Our concern, at present, is neither with children nor adults, but with young people, who are just passing into what is called the age of discretion, and of personal responsibility. Yet we have no quarrel either with the promoters of Missions, or the conductors of schools. We are the friends of all, the enemies of none. These are our fellow-servants, who, together with ourselves, are endeavouring to serve our adorable Master, and to finish the work He has given them to do. It is our persuasion that when St. Paul commanded that children should be "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," he meant that they should be trained into spiritual religion, and become

Christians not merely in name, but in spirit and in truth.

When the Apostles directed us to seek the conversion of our brethren who have erred from the truth, they still knew that prevention is better than cure, and would have us to begin the work in time, and "exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Hence we turn our attention to young people, and try to prevail upon them voluntarily to fulfil their baptismal engagements, to submit to Christ, to become members of His church, and never go to swell the number of those baptized heathens whom all true Christians are seeking to convert and save.

As there were two sorts of Jews, so there are two sorts of Christians. Among the descendants of Abraham there were some who were the covenant people of God both in nature and practice; and others, who were such in name and profession only. St. Paul adverts to this distinction when he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly." Again, he observes, "Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." So, among professed Christians, there are some who have a name to live, but are dead while they profess to be alive; and there are others who have been in reality raised from a death in sin to a life in righteousness.

We proceed to speak of converted and unconverted

young people; and it is requisite that we should distinctly explain what we mean by these terms.

According to the New Testament, true religion has its seat in the heart. Our Saviour says, "The first and great commandment in the law is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." He adds, "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He then goes on to observe, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." All the duties of morality and religion enforced in the Bible hang upon these two principles; just as the branches, the twigs, the leaves, and the blossoms of a tree, all depend upon the root, by which they were produced, and by which they are daily nourished and sustained.

The love of God appears to be a term employed in Scripture to denote the religious principle, in all its stages and degrees, from the highest to the lowest. In the Book of Proverbs God says, "I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me." Here the love of God appears to denote the thoughts and feelings and efforts of a devout and inquiring child; and it is connected with the promise that they shall be crowned with abundant success. Again, we read of loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. These terms are intended to describe the lofty principle which actuates the most eminent saints that ever were or ever will be found among men.

At first this principle exists in its very lowest

form. It scarcely amounts to anything more than a simple act of the will. A sinner feels a desire and a resolution to return to God, and seek His mercy. The prodigal son, first of all, said within himself, "I will arise, and go to my father." Yet that was the language of an inward principle, which was the root and source of all his subsequent proceedings. Human beings by nature have no such inward principle of religion, not even in its lowest form. All are born in sin. They have no desire, no purpose, no will, to return to God, and submit themselves to Him. There is in them no will to seek His favour, and submit to His laws. When the people were invited to the Gospel-feast, "they all with one consent began to make excuse." They said not a word against the entertainment; but they did not choose to go and share in it. Felix trembled, and said to St. Paul, "Go thy way for this time." He did not declare any dislike to what the Apostle had said respecting "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Probably, if he had said anything at all on the subject, it would have been an expression of approval of what he had heard. Still he had no proper liking for these things; no will to enter upon that kind of life at present. Agrippa was almost but not altogether persuaded to be a Christian. He said nothing against Christ and His followers; but it was not his will just then to become a disciple. This want of will to return to God, and submit to His rule, is the same, as to its final results, as if the parties had been actuated by

a spirit of direct and positive enmity against Him. The poor wretches who are now confined in our prisons, wearing chains, or under sentence of death, never intended to be in their present situation. Nay, they thought of nothing less. But it never was their purpose, it never was their will, to do only that which is right; and the result is, they are now where we find them. Others have been sent "where their worm dieth not," and where "the fire is not quenched." They did not intend to come there. But it never was their determination, it never was their will, to fear God and keep His commandments; and for that reason they have been banished from His presence, and from the glory of His power.

To apply these observations to the case before us. There appear to be in the Wesleyan schools upwards of four hundred thousand children. Upon a moderate calculation, fifty thousand must annually leave these institutions. Of these we can hardly assume that more than ten thousand have been truly converted to God. It is true, we hear of revivals of religion in Sunday-schools, and in daily schools; and no doubt many young persons are every year brought to God, and saved, in the Gospel sense of that term. Yet, making the utmost of all these reports and probabilities, not more than ten thousand annually can be considered as included in this happy number. This computation leaves us forty thousand, who are every year going out of our schools without an inward principle of true religion.

We do not assume anything positive to the disadvantage of these young people. Their unhappiness consists mainly in a simple defect. They have no open enmity to Christ; no hatred to religion; but they have no purpose to submit to Him, no will to become members of His church. They are to be pitied, while they are to be blamed. To have no will to obey Christ is the beginning of ruin. This is a capital defect, and is likely to end in a wretched life on earth, and a miserable eternity after death. If these young persons have acquired some respect for the outward forms of religion, they are very much like those unconverted Jews, of whom our Lord says, "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me." Although their outward conduct may be marked with the utmost propriety, yet they have no inward principle of religion that can render them acceptable in the sight of God. Together with those formal Jews, these nominal Christians are likely to be cast into outer darkness, while multitudes, from every quarter of the world, will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

Shall we then suffer these forty thousand young persons to leave our schools unconverted, without making one more personal appeal to their consciences, and without so much as asking them what they are intending to do? It may be they have attended our schools for years, have acquitted them-

selves with honour, and are leaving with a considerable amount of valuable information ; but they have no principle of inward, living religion.

They have long attended our chapels, and have heard many sermons ; but they are not yet persuaded to be Christians. Public appeals have been made to them, but have been made in vain. We are not surely prepared practically to say, "They would not be converted by sermons, therefore they shall not be converted at all." Rather, do we not at once reply, "By all means, let another attempt be made ? They have been addressed in public, let a private appeal now be tried."

Let some enlightened and warm-hearted Christian go to them, and remind them of the change which has been brought about by time. Tell them that though they have been infants and children, they are now young people, and have begun to exercise their own will, to be governed by their own decisions, and are therefore now responsible creatures, each of whom must give an account of himself to God. This is precisely the work which we wish to recommend. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." We want as many labourers as will speak to every young person in connexion with our own religious community. Our desire is that every youth in Methodism should have a direct appeal made to his conscience in the sight of God, by being solemnly asked whether or not he intends to confirm his own baptism, and to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Having made these remarks on the nature of the work we wish to recommend, we will add a few words respecting its importance. We do not wish our friends to waste their energies upon trifles, but invite them to an employment which deeply concerns both the church and the world; and not only the present, but many future generations of mankind.

If there are forty thousand persons leaving the Wesleyan schools every year in an unconverted state, and as many in proportion going from the schools of other denominations; and if this state of things be suffered to continue; it must in time tend to discourage those who are labouring to spread the Gospel in the world. Zealous Ministers in our large towns are preaching to masses of sinners in the open air. Others are employing Home Missionaries and Scripture-Readers to visit and instruct the more ignorant and neglected classes of the community. Already these efforts have been crowned with considerable success, and many individual sinners have been converted and saved.

But if forty thousand unconverted children are every year to leave the Wesleyan schools, and a proportionate number those of the other religious communities, then it is plain, that, however many adult sinners may be reclaimed by open-air preaching, by Home Missions, and other instrumentalities of the same kind, their places are likely to be successively filled up by young persons who have

been brought up in religious schools ; and so the number of unconverted sinners in the country will not be perceptibly diminished from generation to generation.

This fact cannot fail to have a depressing effect upon the spirits of all evangelical labourers. A traveller presses on with increasing energy and speed when he finds himself near the end of his journey, and perceives that he will soon reach his desired home. Soldiers in battle become increasingly fierce and courageous when they see the ranks of the enemy thinned and weakened, and their total defeat likely to be speedy and complete. Labourers work the harder when they are coming to the end of their appointed task, and find that it can be easily finished before the going down of the sun. But all these classes of people feel their hearts fail within them when they see no end of all their toils and anxieties ; when the more they have done, the more remains to be done ; and when success seems to be more distant at the last than it was at the beginning.

Such a sight as this makes their hands to hang down, their knees to become feeble, and sinks them into all the helplessness of utter despair. When a zealous evangelist has laboured long and very hard ; when Christ has crowned his labours with abundant success, and many souls have been brought to repentance and salvation ; if he looks forward and sees new generations of sinners rising

up, and following one another, like waves of the sea, without number, and without end, he is tempted to give up the contest in despair; because, after all he has done, the world continues as wicked as it was before. If we intend to hold up the hands of these good men, we must do something for the forty thousand young people who are annually leaving our schools in an unconverted state. Many good shepherds have gone after the lost sheep who have wandered into the wilderness, have laid them on their shoulders, and are bringing them home rejoicing. If we wish these labours to be continued, we must turn our attention to the lambs, prevail upon them not to leave the fold, but freely to remain with Him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

If this be not done, it is very likely that the standard of morality and religion will be generally lowered, and we shall become satisfied with something less than a true inward and spiritual conversion to God. Regeneration is a moral change, and is the true beginning of a devout and holy life. But when this great work is no longer wrought in the souls of human beings, so that there is no corresponding alteration in their spirit and conduct; when people can no longer find any period in their own lives, or in the lives of others, when those who had been born in sin appeared to be born again, so as to become morally new creatures in Christ Jesus; they gradually cease to look for any

such change, and conclude that the only regeneration is Christian baptism ; and, *that* having been already received, nothing more is to be expected. Men therefore have become satisfied with subjecting their children to the mere rite or ceremony ; and never taught them to pray to God for the bestowment of a new moral principle, which was to lead to a new course of conduct, and which the Bible calls a passing from death unto life.

If, therefore, the Methodists cannot, by the blessing of God, convert their young people ; if they are unable to persuade them voluntarily to submit to Christ, to connect themselves with His church, and to devote themselves to His service ; other churches will conclude that this is a blessing which, however desirable, can never be obtained. The hope of seeing a rising generation, consisting principally of spiritual and happy Christians, will be given up in despair. All sorts of people will content themselves with merely sending their children to school, and giving them a good education, without expecting to see them truly and savingly converted to God. But the Methodists, surely, are not going to give up a great and vital point in such a way as this. Such of our young people as are already truly converted may be safely left as they are ; but such as are still unconverted, we shall surely seek, by another effort, to enlighten and to save. Spiritual Christians in our Societies will surely offer their services in this work ; will undertake to

speak to them, to make another appeal to their consciences, and, if possible, prevail upon them to consent to be pardoned and saved.

Whenever the Methodists agree to work together in this particular department, our community will find the advantage arising from united and well-directed action.

When the efforts of many have been all directed to one point, and that point has been wisely chosen, the final results have often been great and surprising. The walls of a fortified place may be very high, and very strong, and apparently altogether impregnable. Yet, when several cannons have all been brought to play upon one point, a breach has been made in the wall, at which the besiegers have entered, and the place has been taken and subdued.

Gideon's army was very small, having been reduced to an inconsiderable number of men. But they all acted together, surrounded their enemies, broke their pitchers and displayed their lights at one and the same time; all together shouted, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon;" and the immense multitude of the Midianites fell before them. It was a number of calamities, all happening together, which completed the affliction of Job. One messenger, bearing mournful tidings, arrived upon the heels of another; stroke after stroke fell upon him, until his sorrows were complete, and he became a signal monument of suffering and of patience. Several applications, simultaneously

made to David, and all bearing on the same point, led to the coronation of Solomon. It seems there had been an unwillingness on the part of the old King to appoint a successor to the throne during his own lifetime. Many thoughtful people, becoming very uneasy on this account, at length agreed to try the effect of a united application to David. Bathsheba appears to have led the way; and then others followed her into the royal presence, all requesting that Solomon might be immediately crowned and proclaimed in his father's stead. At length the aged Monarch gave way; an order for the coronation was given; and Solomon sat upon the throne of Israel.

Methodists have long been celebrated for acting together in evangelizing the world. It has been often said, "They are *all at it*, and *always at it*." Whenever they agree to speak to young people on the subject of personal conversion, their labours will be wisely directed, and are likely to be crowned with a glorious result. It is true that little children and older people may be converted, and a word spoken to them has often led to salvation. But the richest harvest of souls is likely to be reaped among persons from ten to twenty years of age. When many zealous and devoted servants of Christ all unite in addressing this class of nominal Christians, although they will often meet with difficulties and discouragements, and may "go forth weeping;" yet are they the bearers of a very "precious seed;" and they will "doubtless come again with

rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." If in this department of service they are "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," their labour cannot be "in vain in the Lord." Servants of Christ, who work in His vineyard, whether as sowers or as reapers, are sure to rejoice together, to receive their wages, and to gather fruit unto life eternal.

When our friends unite in this particular work, Methodism will exhibit the spectacle which the world has frequently seen before; namely, that of small causes producing great results. This has often happened in connexion with the work of God. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" "Not by" human "might or power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The miserable remnant of Jews, who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, afterwards became a powerful nation. The kingdom of heaven, the cause of Christ among men, at first resembled a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, but grows into a large and spreading tree. It was said to Abraham, in answer to the prayer which he offered in behalf of Sodom, "If I find but ten righteous men, I will spare the city for the sake of the ten." Yet this seemed a very small number; and we find some difficulty in accounting for the intimation, that for their sakes God would spare all the guilty inhabitants of the devoted city. But God knew that the influence of even ten truly righteous men would be both powerful and extensive. He knew that there was

no resisting the spirit by which they would speak and act.

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." A few Christian lights will give light to the world. God was willing to spare Sodom for the sake of ten righteous men, because these might have put forth an influence which should change the moral character of the entire inhabitants, and render it unnecessary for them to be burnt up and destroyed. Had we but an organization in Methodism which would enable our pious people to speak seriously to every one of our youth on the subject of their conversion to God, although very numerous, and many of them unconverted, they might all be individually and seriously asked whether or not they voluntarily approve of their baptism, and intend to fulfil its design, by choosing Christ for their Master, and consenting to become His servants. This is an arrangement of which some people might think but little, and which others might be ready to despise. But it would be to Methodism something like life from the dead, and could hardly fail to result in a great number of people being added unto the Lord.

Even the mere act of the will of a young person, in deciding for Christ, is often the emission of a spark, which soon becomes a blaze; and we are constrained to say, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

To be sure, it may seem but a small thing to prevail upon a baptized child to fall at the feet of Christ, and say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have

me to do?" But then, even this event, trivial as it may seem, is mysteriously connected with the mighty power of God. Though a small thing in itself, it may be followed by something greater. As with the letting out of water, a few drops, or a small stream, may soon become a torrent which bears down all before it; and we may see the word of the Lord mightily grow and prevail.

ADDRESS II.

THE EARLY RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF MR. WESLEY.

(ADDRESS AT A SUNDAY-SCHOOL MEETING.)

It is the business of this meeting to recommend to your kind consideration the Sunday-school connected with this place of worship. In doing this, it may be profitable to notice the early religious character of Mr. Wesley, and a few things which we are taught by his case respecting the religious treatment of our children. We have been led to adopt this course, not by a feeling of superstition, but by a desire to be useful. Although he was the Founder of our Society, and we greatly honour him for his work's sake, yet I am not now going to connect with his character the idea of infallibility. He was, however, a member of the human family; a partaker of our common nature; and it is very desirable that, in morals and religion, all other children should become such as he was when a child, and be brought up to live and die in the same way. A few observations on some things which have been published respecting this remark-

able man in very early life, and some brief inferences from these facts, may enable our friends who are engaged in conducting the school better to understand the work they have to do.

It is reported of Mr. Wesley, that, when a mere child, he was remarkable, as compared with other children, "for the seriousness of his spirit, and the general propriety of his behaviour;" and that "at the age of eight years he was admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper." These features of character sprang from an inward cause; and what that cause was, is a very proper subject of inquiry. He seems to have been led to feel and act as he did, through that appeal to his conscience which had been made by the word of God. His excellent mother taught him the Bible. That book contains the revelation of God to man, and was an appeal to the conscience of this child, which he could not disregard. He felt that he was an accountable creature; that from the Divine presence it was impossible for him to escape; and that, sooner or later, God would bring every work into judgment, whether it were good or evil. It was this conviction which made him so deeply serious, even when a child. With this seriousness he connected an attendance on the Lord's Supper. To this course he was led by his *will* obeying the dictates of his conscience. Probably other children would laugh at him for being so very serious; but he resolved to do, not what was most pleasing to them, but what he knew to be right in itself, and most profitable to

his own soul. He knew that, although God was his Judge, He was also his best Friend; and His favour he resolved, if possible, to secure.

It will be at once perceived that John Wesley, when eight years of age, was in these respects very different from children generally. He felt very much as Moses did in the wilderness, when he saw the burning bush, and knew it was the sign of the special presence of "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." We read that he "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." So John Wesley felt that the Bible had made an appeal to his conscience; he knew that God was near; and he was filled with reverence and holy fear. But children in general are not so. They rather resemble the sinners of the old world, who did eat and drink, and buy and sell, and thought nothing of God, and what He had said, until Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and swept them all away. Children, generally, amuse themselves with a great variety of things, and think little of God. They are as indifferent to the spiritual world as was the person of whom it is said that he "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," and who seems to have thought little about the future till he died, "and in hell he lift up his eyes." It is true, this is the history of a wealthy man; but there are thousands of poor children who think quite as much of this world, and quite as little of that which is to come. The word of God makes the same appeal to their conscience as it did to that

of John Wesley; but that appeal is either not heard, or is disregarded. The Bible cries, "Awake thou that sleepest;" but the souls sleep on, and take their rest, as if nothing had been said. Or children imitate their father Adam, when he heard the voice of the Lord God, and was afraid, and attempted to hide himself. They understand the appeal made by the Bible; they know that God is near; but they avoid meeting Him, and resolve not to have Him in all their thoughts. Yet, notwithstanding this difference, in moral temper and conduct, between John Wesley and children in general, they all share in the same nature. If he was a responsible being, so is every one of them. He had a conscience, and so have they; and an appeal is made by the Bible to them also. It follows, that, if he was right, all children should be brought to feel and act in the same way.

There are three things which need to be done for the rising generation. First, something should be done to bring their consciences and wills into harmony with their actual position as moral and accountable beings. Secondly, they need to have their errors corrected, and their deficiencies supplied. Although Mr. Wesley, when a child, was serious and consistent, yet he had still much to learn on the subject of religion. Thirdly, Mr. Wesley lived to be more than eighty years of age; some of our children may possibly live as long, and therefore need to be told how they may keep themselves unspotted from the world, and attain eternal life.

But a difficulty presents itself at the very outset of this work ; and that relates to the parties whose proper business and duty it is to do these things. Some say that parents only ought to be the religious instructors of children ; others, that it is the work of teachers in the school ; and others say it belongs to the Ministers of the Gospel. This dispute has been going on for some years ; and a longer period is likely to elapse before it will be settled. In the meantime, children are every where seen to perish for lack of the knowledge they need. Anything that is done for them must be done soon, or it will be for ever too late. That person, whoever he may be, who comes first to their help, is the most acceptable to God, and evinces the largest share of the spirit of our holy religion.

1. We have said that children need to have their conscience and will rightly directed, and brought into harmony with their actual position. The Bible contains God's appeal to the human conscience, whatever the response may be. As an exhibition of pictures is an appeal to the eye, and a musical festival is an appeal to the ear, so the word of God is an appeal to the conscience that is in man. It appeals indeed to our imagination, by its poetry ; to our feelings, by its representations ; and to our reason, by its facts and arguments. But its great subject is the moral ruin and recovery of the human race ; and it is by the conscience that we judge of all moral subjects, and discern the difference between right and wrong, between sin and

obedience. In other cases, it is of little consequence what response is given to an appeal, or even whether there be any response at all. A man who looks upon a picture may be very good and happy, though he has not the eye of a painter. A good man may listen to music without having a musical ear. His senses may be so blunted, that he can scarcely discern the difference between one tune, or one sound, and another; still he may discharge all his duties in this world, and enjoy the happiness of heaven in the next. But it is far otherwise in questions of morals and religion. Here our eternal all depends upon the answer given to God's appeal to the conscience in His word. If we do not see the difference between right and wrong, if we do not choose the good and refuse the evil, if we do not "cease to do evil and learn to do well," we cannot be acceptable to God at present, or be numbered with His saints in glory everlasting. It is "the answer of a good conscience toward God," which makes all the difference between a rogue and an honest man, between a saint and a sinner, between a lost soul and a glorified spirit. When things are found to be wrong at the last, they were commonly wrong at the first; and that was the true cause of all the evil that followed. There was a house which fell, when assailed by floods and storms, but it was at first built upon the sand; and that led to the disastrous result. An ungodly child generally grows into a wicked man, and into a lost soul in perdition. On the other hand, what is right at the

beginning is commonly right at the end. If the seed is an acorn, the tree is sure to prove an oak. A traveller may have a long journey; but if he enter the right road, and persevere in it, he will finally arrive at the right place. Whoever in early life is as serious and religious as was John Wesley, will be very likely, with him, to become a holy and a useful man, and a glorified spirit in heaven. What our children want, therefore, is some person, who will not merely take them to a Sunday-school, and give them some good and useful lessons, but who will prevail upon them to listen attentively to that appeal which the Bible makes to their conscience, and then to obey the decisions of that conscience, though in opposition to all the world beside. It is to this principle that they must come at last, if ever they become Christians and save their souls alive; and under the guidance of this principle they may fall in the days of early childhood, as well as at any later period of life.

2. We have also said that our children need to have their mistakes corrected, and their deficiencies supplied. Every body at all familiar with the history of John Wesley knows that, although very serious when a child, and truly sincere, he had yet much to learn in religion, as his views were very mistaken, and his character very defective. He had formed in his own mind a sort of system of salvation by works, which was founded entirely in ignorance and mistake. At that time he knew nothing of the doctrine of justification by faith, or

of the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. He had many conversations and debates with Moravian Ministers, both in America and in London; and by their instrumentality many mistakes were corrected, and many deficiencies supplied. That he should have been under the necessity of taking this course, however, was the result of a very unsatisfactory state of things. He was a member of a Church which baptized him when an infant, which afterwards gave him the rite of confirmation, and of course subjected him to a religious examination respecting his present views and future intentions. This Church ought to have been able, without sending him to the Moravians, to tell him wherein he was mistaken, and to point him to the road leading to immortality and eternal life. Methodism professes to supply some deficiencies which formerly existed in the Church of England, and should certainly be in a condition to lead her young people directly to Christ and salvation. They ought not to be compelled to go abroad in search of religious information; neither should they be left to the guidance of any book they may happen to read, or of any teacher into whose company they may be thrown. Especially they need to be taught the habit of listening attentively to the appeals made to their conscience by the word of God, and to adhere to its decisions, when so enlightened and directed, however contrary that course may be to the opinions and example of those around them. When they are cared for by such

religious instructors as these, they will not be as children carried to and fro "with every wind of doctrine," nor be blown away from the church of their fathers by every change in fashion or popular opinion; but, being rooted and grounded in love, will grow up into Christ, their living Head, in all things.

3. We have already stated that Mr. Wesley, while he began to be religious when a child, lived on to a good old age. Some of our children may begin to be religious as soon, and yet live to be as old; and therefore they need some one to put them in such a way that they may endure to the end. They must be so brought up, that their goodness may not prove as the morning cloud, and as the early dew; nor must they pass from under the care of their parents and teachers to go over to the world, and increase the number of the enemies of Jesus. In the family and the school they are to learn the discipline of the Lord; to be prepared to fight His battles against sin, the world, and the devil; and "continue His faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end." They must go out of the school into the church. Pupils must become labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, and lay up for themselves a good reward in the day of final account. Mr. Wesley was eminently serious and religious in his childhood; and when he went to the University he continued as attentive to all the duties of a holy life as he had ever been before. Then he offered himself as a Missionary to the

Indians in America, and for some time laboured in that country. He finally became a Home Missionary, and for many years performed incredible labours in the way of travelling and preaching, in order to save baptized profligates, who were living without God and without hope in the world. It was not till he was between eighty and ninety years of age that he was gathered home to his fathers, and went to be for ever with the Lord. Methodism will never be like its Founder, until its members are persons who begin to serve the Lord in childhood; and afterwards, through all their changes and trials, continue to walk before God in holiness and righteousness, to the very end of life. In order to secure this continuance in religion, we must begin with our children betimes, and take special pains with them in early life. Mr. Wesley continued the servant of Jesus Christ to the very end of his laborious and protracted life, because in childhood he had become so thoroughly convinced, in his judgment and in his conscience, of the duty and blessedness of submitting to Him. We must take our young people by the hand in childhood, if we wish them to live holy lives, and to finish with a hopeful death; and lead them through the strait gate, and into the narrow way, by teaching them to follow the word of God, and the decisions of their conscience, rather than the example of all the world.

It is well known that John Wesley's mother was a zealous Missionary. When prospects of

promotion in the church at home opened before him, his mother freely gave him up to go and preach the Gospel to the Indians in America; yet had she taken such true pains with the religion of this very child, that when not more than eight years of age he became deeply serious. Mr. Wesley himself was a thorough Missionary, both at home and abroad. His well-known motto was, "The world is my parish;" and through a long life he laboured with all his might to seek and save that which was lost. Yet he began to fear the Lord in his youth, and to the end of his days was the friend of piety in little children. From all the antecedents of Methodism, and the well-known history of our Founder, we are authorized to infer that true zeal in the cause of Missions, and the conversion of adults, is always connected with suitable efforts to bring children to Christ. As a religious community the Methodists have made prodigious efforts to send the Gospel to heathens abroad, and have evinced great zeal for the conversion of adult profligates at home. A great deal is said of our success in these departments of labour, but we hear very little of our converted children. Many become worldly and godless after leaving our schools, while but few of them are deeply serious in very early life. Yet, if our zeal be of the right kind, it will lead us to seek the salvation of children as well as of adults; and the result will be, that many of them, like our Founder, will become serious and religious at a very early period of life.

It is said that Franklin was filled with joy when he witnessed the success of his experiment to ascertain the nature of lightning, by means of the paper kite which he had sent up into the air. If he was so delighted when he saw the fibres of a cord begin to bristle by the action of the electric fluid, what may a Sunday-school teacher feel when he has made an appeal to a human conscience, and receives from that conscience a response to his appeal; when his scholar becomes deeply serious, and says to the Judge of all the earth, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That may be a cloud, little as a man's hand; but it is surcharged with blessings. We do not say such a child will exactly imitate John Wesley, and become an equal blessing to the world; but we do say that if you but awaken his conscience, and bring him to be religious in early life, you thereby begin a work. How far it may spread, what good it will effect, and when it will end, eternity alone will disclose.

ADDRESS III

A MISSION OF PREVENTION.

(ADDRESS AT A SUNDAY-SCHOOL MEETING.)

I HAVE lately thought very much on the importance and necessity of a Mission of Prevention in Methodism, to act in connexion with our schools, and for the benefit of our children. We have many Missions conducted on the principle of cure; and, while all this is very proper, it appears to me to be equally proper that we should have one on the principle of prevention. I mean, the setting apart of one of our own regular Ministers to this work; not that he may interfere in any way with our existing agencies, but co-operate with them all, and assist them in the best and most efficient manner of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Blessed be God, that we have Foreign Missions, and Home Missions, and City Missions, and all sorts of Missions, for the purpose of reclaiming profligate adults. But we should have at least one Mission for the sake of our own children, to act on the principle of prevention. Missionaries to adults are like men stationed at various

distances in the way to hell ; so that, when a man has been travelling for several hours, he will meet with somebody who will tell him he is altogether in the wrong road ; and that, if he would get right, he must turn about, and go back again. No wonder if he should be unwilling to take this advice, and say, "It seems I am wrong, but it is a long way to go back again ; I can get right by a shorter route : " and so he will turn aside into some by-path, either to the right hand or to the left. But there is a point when the youthful traveller enters upon the journey of life, when the wrong road begins to incline from the right by just a slight divergence ; and if we had a Missionary stationed there, he would say, "This is the way, walk ye in it," before they turned into the broad road that leadeth unto destruction. An adult sinner is a lost sheep, who has gone off into the wilderness ; and we have Missionaries to follow the wanderer, and, if possible, lay it on their shoulders, and bring it home rejoicing. But the same perverse spirit is in the lambs of the flock ; and they are eager to follow in the same course, and run into the same misery and ruin. Surely, then, we should have one Missionary to take care of these, and, if possible, convince them that there is nothing but famine and death in the wilderness ; and that it is their wisdom to remain in the fold. I am glad we have so many Missionaries to go after the prodigal son into the far country, to find him out in his rags and misery, and persuade him to arise and go to his Father. But then it should be

remembered that all children are members of the same family; that they are actuated by the same spirit, and eager to pursue the same course. It is well, therefore, to send one Missionary to them, and try to convince them that, if they go into the "far country," the probability is that from it they will never return; and that it is their wisdom and interest to remain in their father's house.

I. That there is some call for a Mission of prevention among the Methodists will, I think, appear from the following considerations. There are, it appears, in our Sunday-schools, more than four hundred thousand scholars. Were any person to tell me there were four hundred thousand trees in a wood, or bricks in a building, most likely I should just hear the statement at the time, and think very little more about the matter. But the case of four hundred thousand intelligent, redeemed, and immortal creatures, capable of becoming either lost souls in hell or glorified spirits in heaven, is a very different affair. No Christian can hear of this vast number of children, in such circumstances, and with such prospects, without being filled with solicitude. St. Paul could not forget the Thessalonian converts whom he had left behind in persecution. He had been forcibly driven out of their city by his enemies, and obliged to flee for his life. But he left behind him a number of people, newly brought from Heathenism to Christianity. He saw it likely that a part of the storm from which he had escaped

would fall upon the heads of these disciples. The thought of a number of raw and inexperienced converts, exposed to persecution, and suddenly deprived of the presence of their religious father and guide, filled him with solicitude. Such a people, under such circumstances, appeared very likely to apostatize, and renounce their Christianity, to save their liberty or their lives. Hence the Apostle trembled for them, and prayed for them, and thought about them, until his anxiety became a burden intolerable to be borne; and he tells us he "could no longer forbear." He had heard nothing to the disadvantage of these persons; no one had told him that they had fallen away, or were likely to prove unfaithful to Christ. But he knew that young converts in such circumstances were very likely to fall away; and he thought of them till he was compelled, for the relief of his own mind, to do something for their preservation. There is enough in the circumstances of our children to fill any Christian mind with anxiety. They are all born in sin; and each of them has within him "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Satan is transformed into an angel of light, in order to deceive and destroy these ignorant and unstable souls. All the allurements of the world are spread out before them. Every man who looks at the trials through which they have to pass, must tremble for the issue. On the other hand, Jesus says, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."

They may listen to the teaching of Christ; they may be made wise unto salvation; they may become the light of the world, and the salt of the earth, and be finally admitted to the presence of Jesus, and see the glory which He had with the Father before the world began. Hence the case of our children fills us with solicitude.

II. 1. St. Paul says to the Thessalonians, "When I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith." While he was at Athens, he sent Timothy to Thessalonica, in order to ascertain, by personal inquiries on the spot, what was the actual state of these newly-converted people, and what was likely to be the issue of their present trials. The Apostle was led to institute an inquiry, not in order to gratify an idle curiosity, but for the purpose of preventing future mischief. "Lest," says he, "by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." Had the Apostle remained ignorant of the true condition of these people, the enemy might have defeated the servants of Christ, and destroyed the fruit of their labours. Inquiry and information enabled him to frustrate the designs of the enemy, and to save these converts from his power. We want a Missionary, who will make inquiry, and obtain exact information, not for the purpose of gratifying an idle curiosity, but in order to prevent the ruin, and secure the salvation, of our children. We have many large and flourishing Sunday-schools, and we should like to know exactly how they are conducted, in order that we

may judge how far their management does or does not admit of any improvement. We have a large and increasing number of Day-schools, and it is desirable to know exactly what provision has been made for the evangelical instruction of the children attending them. There are very many places in which the Wesleyans have regular preaching and a Society, but where they have no Sunday-school whatever. One would like to know what is done for the children in these places, and how far they are receiving that evangelical attention which to them is so important and necessary. Then we have comparatively very few catechumen classes; and we should like to know what is being done for the thousands of young people who are leaving our schools, in order that the evangelical information they have already received may be conducted to a good and profitable result.

At present we take it for granted that, in all these places, things are just as they ought to be. That is certainly a very comfortable conclusion for those who are able to adopt it. The opinion, too, may be as true as it is agreeable, and there may be no call for improvement; but still one would like to ascertain by careful inquiry what is the exact state of the case.

2. It is also very desirable, in a matter so very important as the evangelization of our children, that we should know something about the future, as well as the present and the past; and not only ascertain what means are employed for the evangelization of

our children, but also know something of the direction in which they are tending, and of the results to which they are likely to lead. Do not say this is impossible. Tell us not that the human mind cannot penetrate the future, and men know nothing about things which are to come. Farmers examine the state of their corn-fields in spring, and form an opinion on the scantiness or abundance of the harvest. Things the most unknown and fluctuating have been subjected to rules which have enabled men to speculate on the future with an almost unerring certainty. Human life, for instance, is proverbially uncertain; and yet, out of a hundred men twenty years of age, actuaries will tell you how many of them are likely to die before they are threescore years and ten, and how many to live beyond that appointed age of man. At present we know that thousands of young persons are leaving our schools every year, and afterwards seldom attend a place of worship. Only a small proportion become pillars in the church of God. All this is constantly coming to pass before our eyes. It might, however, be known beforehand, just as well as after it has actually happened. There are young persons attending our chapels, Sunday after Sunday, who plainly declare by their words and actions that they will cease to come as soon as they are placed at their own disposal. In any given number of children, subjected to proper evangelical treatment, it is possible to ascertain what proportion of them are likely to be in due time converted to God.

That fore-knowledge and after-knowledge are widely different in their influence upon human conduct is evident from the language of David in reference to his afflicted child. "While the child was yet alive," said he, "I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." While events are yet future, they are in some respects conditional and uncertain. When they have actually come to pass, they become fixed and unalterable. When a child has actually left a Sunday-school, cast off the restraints of religion, and begun to neglect public worship, his teachers sink into despair, and say, "We have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought." But while he yet remains in the school, and his future profligacy is yet a conditional and uncertain event, we should study the best mode of treatment, and strain every nerve in order to give a right bias and direction to his mind. There has been a great deal of evangelical labour bestowed upon our children, both in the school and at home; but the tempter has tempted them, and much of this labour has been in vain. It is the design of this adversary to frustrate all our efforts to evangelize the young, and to prevail upon them to follow "the devices and desires of their own hearts," and "walk according to the course of this world." Paul, however, was not disposed to decline the contest, and allow

the enemy to have all his own way; and therefore sent Timothy to institute inquiries. We are commanded not to "give place to the devil." He has deluded our children almost without interruption from generation to generation; but we mean to get further light, and to learn wisdom by the things we have suffered. We shall combine all our existing agencies, and make them

"A band of love, a threefold cord,
Which never can be broke."

Then will Methodism become "fair as the moon,
clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with
banners."

ADDRESS IV.

A PLAN FOR THE RELIGIOUS TREATMENT OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN.

1. THE will is to be gained; and that is influenced by arguments; therefore let the first years of childhood be chiefly spent in considering the evidence that man is an accountable being, entirely under the control of Jesus Christ, and the reasons why we should submit to Him.

2. During the later years of childhood, let suitable means be used in order to ascertain whether the young person does freely accept of Jesus Christ, and consent to become His servant.

3. Let all who do this be committed to the care of some experienced Christian; if possible, to a Methodist Class-Leader, and taught "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

4. Since, in Methodism, meeting in class is connected with matters of finance; in order to obviate all inconveniencies of that nature, let the young persons, thus admitted into the Society, remain on trial as long as the Minister and Leader deem it expedient.

5. Let the adult church of Methodism, including

Ministers, Leaders, and private members, ever remember that it is her special duty to see that all this be really done. If necessary, she must appoint new assistants in this department.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The above "plan" says nothing about physical or intellectual treatment, but simply contemplates that which is *religious* and *moral*. It speaks only of *baptized* children, who, having been solemnly dedicated to Christ, and made members of His church, are expected, of course, to become in mature life true Christians. The "plan" also assumes that all are "born in sin," and can become truly holy only by undergoing a great moral change, called by St. John passing "from death unto life." This change may take place in childhood or youth, as well as in the midst of life, in old age, on a bed of sickness, and even on the verge of death. This "plan" considers only the case of such children as are permitted to live and grow to maturity. Those who die in infancy will be treated on some distinct principle. With them we have nothing to do. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The main parts of this "plan" are all illustrated and confirmed in the well-known history of the Founder of Methodism. He began to be religious in childhood, led an eminently zealous and useful life, and continued "faithful unto death." Such as he was, we wish all his people to be; and if our baptized children prove to be throughout life true

Wesleyans, that is all we desire. As he was eminently a religious man, so he was such on principle; for, from early life, it has been said, he would do nothing without a reason. Whatever arguments led him to be religious, they were the suggestions of his mother, for she was his chief teacher; and, although her views of the nature of true religion were defective, she understood well the grounds on which it rested. By her instrumentality he was effectually cured of that "Atheism," which, according to his own account, is the chief symptom of our hereditary moral disease. That he was an accountable creature, and must finally stand before the Judge of all, was a conviction which in his mind, while he was but a child, became "as a nail fastened in a sure place."

From all that has been said of the man we conclude that, before he embraced religion, the grounds of it were well understood, and that his earlier years had been passed in the consideration of them. These reasons led to decision; for it is a well-known fact that Mr. Wesley was voluntarily religious; and that he deliberately chose to devote himself to God, and become one of His servants. After arriving at this decision, there was no Methodist Class-Leader to take him by the hand. For years he felt there was something wanting, but knew not what, and continued to grope his way in the dark until the Moravians came to his aid, and guided his feet into the way of peace.

The conduct of the Church of which he was a

member confirms that part of our "plan" which speaks of the responsibility of the adult Wesleyan community. At that time many parents neglected their duty; godfathers and godmothers made promises which they never performed; the Church was silent, and the whole nation became immoral and alienated from God. Nor will matters be satisfactory among the Methodists, whatever plan of treatment for their children may be prescribed, unless her Ministers and lay officers will undertake to see that the work be really done.

There is a will in man which possesses the awful power of frustrating the gracious designs of God. It is a settled principle in His dealings with mankind, that no human being is to be saved without his own consent. Jesus said to His Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth," and thereby yields his consent to God, "shall be saved." Multitudes were converted and saved in the apostolic age; as the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; Saul of Tarsus, Lydia, and the jailer, with many others. Not one of these was converted without the concurrence of his own will. We make this broad assertion without the slightest reference to any nice and metaphysical disputes. Consent is clearly indicated in every case.

Yet the consent of the will, when gained in childhood for Christ, is not the end of salvation, but its beginning; and there is much afterwards to be done, in order that the parties may "grow in

grace," be kept "from falling," and presented "before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." This shows the importance of the third direction in our "plan." Some persons, jealous for the purity of Methodism, are afraid of classes being swamped by multitudes of inexperienced young people; but Christ says, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Methodists surely will not refuse whom the Lord has "received." Children have often met with but a cold reception into a class, because they were ignorant, and perhaps inconsistent; but those who have consented to be saved by Christ, thereby declare their desire to improve, and are to be in every way assisted and encouraged. "Who hath despised the day of small things," when it is big with consequences vast as eternity?

Much inconvenience has been felt from the circumstance of children, unable to contribute, being constituted members of Society, and counted as such. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. Young people have been permanently injured by being made the subjects of contention. All these inconveniencies are easily obviated by keeping them "on trial" for a suitable time.

ADDRESS V.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND CLASS-MEETINGS.

SEVERAL older children, chiefly boys, who had been brought up in a Wesleyan Sunday-school, after being separately conversed with on the subject of personal religion, were each affectionately invited to meet in class. With some hesitation they acceded to this proposal, and prepared to attend accordingly. But here arose a new difficulty. Both the Leader and several of his members objected to the admission of these youths, as they did not evince any distinct "desire to flee from the wrath to come." So far as could be ascertained, they were not actuated by any improper motive, but simply consented, when asked, to become the pupils of a religious man, and try, by the use of means, to find out "the good and the right way." Still they were deemed entirely unfit for such a purely religious exercise; and it was thought they might possibly make a very improper report of what they were likely to hear. As these are probably not the only parties who will feel this difficulty, and the same objection is likely to be repeated, it may be

well, once for all, seriously to look at it in the light of reason and experience.

Although Methodism had a very humble origin, and is but of modern date, yet since it has been characterized as a "revival" of Christianity, and called the "work of God" by its Founder and friends, they have taken it out of the category of merely human and private systems, and authorized us to inquire how far its usages are in accordance with the recorded mind of Christ, and likely to fulfil His vast designs of mercy to mankind.

Some light is thrown on the question by the well-known words and conduct of the Saviour, when "they brought young children to Him." Whatever else may be implied in this narrative, it at least teaches that every single step which is likely to lead young people to a voluntary submission to Christ, they should, by all means, be encouraged to take. The children here referred to were seemingly very young, and at the time incapable of choice; yet this merely passive application to Christ, since it was introductory, and likely to lead to a connexion with Him of still greater importance, was encouraged by Himself. On the same principle a young person, consenting, when asked, to meet in class, even if reluctant to avow a desire to "flee from the wrath to come," should be welcomed by the Leader and the members, since this first step directly leads to his saying, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

Another lesson plainly taught in this passage is,

that, with respect to the next world, adults and children are placed on a level with each other. Adult believers, when they die, are "with Christ," and "behold His glory;" and little children in the disembodied state "do always behold the face" of the Father. With respect to this world, young and old have an equal offer of salvation. The man who seeks admission into the evangelical "kingdom of God" on any principle which does not equally apply to little children "shall not enter therein." Having long resisted the will of God, it may cost him an effort to come down to the same depth of humiliation, and evince the same yielding temper. The prodigal son was welcomed home with transports of joy; yet, after all, it was necessary for him passively to submit to his father. Had he not made up his mind to that, it had been useless for him to come back. This, however, was to return again to his original position, and his former child-like state of mind. Children, who are made partakers of the evangelical salvation offer no opposition to the fulfilment of God's gracious design concerning them, and therefore He fulfils in them "all the good pleasure of His goodness." "Who-soever," among adults, "shall not" become equally passive in his submission to Christ, so as to resemble "clay in the hands of the potter," and "receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

This principle of equal grace shown to adults and children is involved in infant baptism, and in the

lessons given both in the Old and New Testaments. Christian children are to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition," or, as Mr. Wesley renders it, "the instruction and discipline," "of the Lord." Adult believers are to walk in the same light, and to bow to the same authority; for they are to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour," and to behave as "under the law to Christ."

If these two classes of sinners are called to the same purity and blessedness, they are to seek the attainment of it in the use of the same means. This includes all the means of grace, both direct and indirect; whether appointed by God, or only considered needful by man. A ministry which aims only to interest and instruct adults, while the young are overlooked and mentally unreached, introduces a distinction which God has neither made nor sanctioned.

We conclude that persons who would gain and keep religion in such a world as this, should receive private as well as public instruction, and should join the Society while they attend our ministry. Hence serious persons often seen at the preaching are invited to a class-meeting, and earnestly advised to avail themselves of that particular means of salvation. Whatever we deem necessary religiously for adults, God regards as equally so for young people. After these have found the good and right way, they are more easily turned out of it. To maintain that class-meetings are necessary for

adults, but unsuitable for the young, is to make a distinction between parties whom God proposes to treat on a common principle.

As adults and children are admitted into the same kingdom, so are they brought into it by the efforts of parties actuated by one and the same motive. St. Paul tells us what he did and suffered in order to bring adult sinners to God. As to the principle by which he was actuated, he observes, "The love of Christ constraineth us." If we suppose that mere philanthropy, love of country, or any motive lower than that of the love of Christ, in parents and others, is sufficient to induce them to bring children to true morality and happiness, while the conversion of an adult can be effected only by the power of a higher principle, we attempt to make a difference in cases which God assumes to be all alike.

It may be objected that a number of "unconverted children" brought into the Society would greatly interfere with its religious purity, and soon render it a mere association of worldly-minded people. In offering a reply to this objection it will be necessary for us to examine carefully what is said respecting the sanctity of the church in the New Testament. From such passages as Eph. v. 25—27, 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30, Matt. xiii. 47—50, 1 Cor. v. 7, Matt. xiii. 29, 30, it appears that the moral purity of the Christian church is a progressive work; and that although, in the end, its members are "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;"

yet, originally, and when first enclosed in the Gospel net, their character is very different. God Himself will finally separate the righteous from the wicked. So that the end of this gracious arrangement was to transform the sinner into a saint; and if this result be not attained, the same authority which admitted them into the church will put them out of its fellowship. As this separation is sure to be made at last, it should now begin by men, so far as may be within human ability. Members of the church are received *on trial*; and its purity, as far as practicable, must be preserved. Yet we must be content with *comparative* purity; for higher aims at social perfection will do more harm than good. In attempting to gather all the tares, we shall root up also the wheat with them.

The purity of the church should always be contemplated in connexion with its extension. The Bible plainly teaches us that although at first, and in the days of the Apostles, but a remnant among the nations to whom the Gospel was preached became the subjects of its hallowing power; yet, in following ages, it should more and more diffuse its spirit through the masses of mankind, until it had changed the policy of civil governments, and corrected the morals of general society. Christianity, indeed, after its promulgation, was to encounter ages of persecution; but when the great battle of religious liberty had been fought, and the days of "toleration" had arrived, this word of the Lord was to run and be glorified. Yet even in

England the Gospel has not yet fulfilled its mission, as the moral state of our country abundantly testifies. But since this revelation from heaven is armed with a moral power unquestionably superior to all the forms of human depravity, it is a very proper question how far this failure is owing to the resistance the system has had to encounter, and how far to the mistakes of those who have been entrusted with its management. Undoubtedly the depravity of human nature is very great, and that will partly account for the limited spread of true religion. It is equally true that the Gospel has never yet been given to the rising generation according to the will and arrangements of its adorable Author.

Respecting any Sunday-scholars, or other young persons, who have been impressed in a prayer-meeting, and have attracted attention by strong cries and tears, there is no difficulty. These are at once readily received by any Leader with whom they may wish to meet. Nor is there any room for hesitation with reference to those who utterly refuse when invited to attend a class. Their case is decided by themselves. To their own Master they stand or fall. As to those who are willing to meet in class, but, because they give no distinct evidence of "a desire to flee from the wrath to come," are refused admission among us, the case is different. Hundreds and thousands of such young people have been kept back and discouraged; till, left wholly to themselves, they have gone into the world. But of

them their religious guardians are likely to hear again. The mother who had committed her child to the care of a servant in the morning, and then found it not forthcoming in the evening, would be very likely to institute an inquiry on the subject. Nor is Jesus less interested in the children whom He has "purchased with His own blood." "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Very likely, after our utmost efforts, there will be many cases of failure. Whenever such cases become the subjects of inquiry, as they undoubtedly will be, we must be prepared to furnish such evidence as will lead the Judge of all the earth to say, "They have done what they could." But certainly we have *not* done all, nor even our best, to bring these young persons to submit themselves unto Christ, and to secure their permanent obedience to Him, when they are either quietly dismissed, or sent to some sort of preparatory class with others as ignorant as themselves; but denied, even in the way of trial, though willing to come under the mighty moral influence involved in frequent intercourse with a body of adult and truly religious people.

ADDRESS VI.

THE CHURCH IS BOUND TO CARE FOR HER CHILDREN.

It may be said that "to fix the attention of Methodism upon children is to seek to change its entire character and design. In its very origin it was simply a Missionary system, instituted expressly in order to spread vital Christianity among ignorant and profane people, who were openly neglecting the Gospel salvation." All this is perfectly true; and it is equally so, that at that time Methodism was considered as merely an appendage to the Church of England. Such a character was perfectly consistent with that ecclesiastical status. That which is simply missionary, is merely a relative agency, or the organ of another church; and cannot aspire to independence, without losing its character and changing its position. As soon as it becomes a separate church, and begins to act for itself, it ceases to be a merely Missionary institution, and is bound to take care of its own children. Methodism must be consistent with itself, and not adhere to a character at variance with its present loftier preten-

sions. Right or wrong, it has for ever set aside the plea of being simply a Missionary system, by claiming to be a distinct church. All its present ordinations and baptisms demonstrate that. Besides its former care for those who are "ignorant, and out of the way," it is now bound to see that its own children be taught, not only to read, or to know many things of which they were formerly ignorant, but in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Augmented privileges have increased her obligations; and works which were indifferent before are duties now. Say not, "We have numerous schools, supported at a vast expense, and conducted by accomplished teachers; you can scarcely ask us to do more for the rising generation." Have we ever sought and obtained their voluntary consent to a holy life? If not, but little towards their morality has yet been effected. Children are free-willers like their parents, and remain in an unsatisfactory condition so long as God is left to say to them, "I called, but ye refused."

It is not enough that parents and teachers seek the salvation of children, and Ministers of the Gospel merely enter into the labours of other people; for so long as the one party baptizes those whom the others bring to the ordinance, this involves a partnership in the work of religious education, which, when once begun, should be continued to the end. Unless Ministers, at least, examine young people, they are equally unfitted to determine when they are eligible for admission into the adult church,

or to give them suitable advice. Were children contemplated in sermons, by having their objections answered, and by being invited to submit to Christ, who unquestionably seeks to reign over them, they would not only be brought to chapel in connexion with the Sunday-school, but be led, as matter of choice, to attend at other times.

It was a maxim of conduct with the early Methodists, to follow the providence of God, and to go wherever it led them. We see this principle in operation throughout the entire personal history of Mr. Wesley; so that the stiff Churchman became, by degrees, filled with the free spirit of the Gospel of Christ. Both he and his associates, at every stage of their proceedings, are seen bending to circumstances, which appeared to them under Divine direction. If the Methodists of the present day are the servants of the same adorable Master, and equally respect the intimations of His will, we shall do for children what they did for adults. Whatever might be the original vocation of Methodism, it is notorious that at present multitudes of children are looking to the system for religious direction. The same overruling Providence, which opened the way of our fathers to vast masses of adult sinners, has given to their descendants access to multitudes of children. Either we must seek their regeneration, or turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Our fathers have passed the Rubicon, and left nothing for us but to subdue the world. They laboured hard and successfully to prove that "Jesus died for all,"

and redeemed the whole world by the sacrifice of Himself. If we are actuated by the same spirit, we shall seek to render the Gospel salvation attainable by the entire human race, and pour the streams of truth and grace on children, until the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth, as the waters cover the face of the sea.

The original Methodists had a great reverence for the National Establishment, and were very unwilling to forsake her services, though their Ministers were excluded from her pulpits, and their members far from welcomed to the table of the Lord. The usages of that Church respecting children deserve the attention even of dissenters from her communion. She baptizes infants, prays that they may be born "of the Spirit," and exacts of their sponsors a promise that they shall be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." These practices involve a principle which is in perfect accordance with the doctrine of original sin, the redemption of the world, and the general declarations of the Gospel. It is our wisdom not to disregard her teaching, but to labour to improve upon her example.

Respecting the absolute necessity of religion in order to human well-being, the trumpet of the early Methodists gave no uncertain sound. They invariably said to all, whether their character was good or bad, "Ye must be born again." For this language they have been ridiculed as persons who had but one idea; but such as received their teaching were

observed to "walk in newness of life." If we suppose that any other kind of teaching will be sufficient to make children morally good, we are ignorant of their nature and circumstances. It is as plain as the word of Christ can make it, that, except they be "born again," they "cannot see the kingdom of God." Their regeneration, therefore, is to be accomplished, whether set about at once, or put off to "a more convenient season." If this great change cannot be completed in a child, it may be begun as well as in an older person. Simple consent to be the servant of Christ is the pledge of regeneration, and the commencement of the work itself.

A child may refuse his consent even when asked by God Himself. This is a beginning, but it is not the end. It is but the commencement of a dispute between God and the soul; and although the soul, by resistance, may seem to have ended the struggle, it will most likely hear of the matter again. God is sure to return to the question, either in judgment or in mercy. He may return for the purpose of punishing disobedience. Why does He send so many sinners to hell? Simply, because, while He would have all men to be saved, it pleased them to refuse and rebel. His rights are maintained, and His character vindicated; but this is done solely by Himself. He says, indeed, "I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another." But this is altogether His own affirmation. Even children should voluntarily "give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name."

At other times the same thing is done in the way of mercy. Many cases occur of pent-up feelings, long struggling for vent, which make considerable noise when at length it is obtained. Persons have refused to submit themselves unto God, when pressed to do it in early life; but a sense of His great authority has continued to increase, till at length it became perfectly overpowering, and they were compelled to roar aloud on account of the disquietude of their souls. Let it be ever remembered that God has made no promise, nor is He under any obligation, to exercise this forbearance and long-suffering. While to some He continues to say, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" there were others to whom "He sware in His wrath, that they should not enter into His rest."

Our complaint is not that our young people are totally neglected, but that they are treated, morally and religiously, on a mistaken principle. A common complaint among Sunday-school teachers is, that the final result of their labours is far from satisfactory. They say that, on leaving school to work for their bread, the moral principles of their scholars become corrupted; they grow worldly in their spirit, and seem rapidly to forget what they had previously learned. Youthful religion has often "vanished away," just because, though recommended by others, it was never chosen by the parties themselves. The mind was unduly excited, or the subject was presented under some delusive aspect;

but in its true colours it never had the full concurrence of their will. All the friends of children, therefore, must be careful that they be clear on this point. At the same time consent must be duly estimated, and not taken for more than it is worth. It is not the end of religion. It is not its middle. It is merely the beginning. It is that preparatory state which the Methodists generally express by the term "awakened." It is the sowing of the seed, the planting of the tree, the formation of the bud, the offering of a pledge, which may end in nothing, or issue in holiness. Yet let young people purpose well, and fear not; for there is a God who has said, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

The Gospel is sent to people of all ages, and in all circumstances. Between children and adults God has made "no difference." He has clearly assumed an identity of their natural position, admitted them to an identity of privileges, prescribed for them an identity of treatment, and anticipated for them all an identical and favourable result. Having been placed by the ordinance of baptism on a level with adults, children are not to be left exclusively to parents and schools, but must become the care of the entire church, into which they have been admitted by Divine appointment.

ADDRESS VII.

AN INQUIRY ANSWERED.

It is often asked, "How should the young persons connected with Methodism be treated?" People often say, "We are quite aware that the state of things between Methodism and its youth is not satisfactory; but we want a plan of action. If there be but given to us a plan of treatment, which is at the same time practicable and efficient, we are prepared at once to carry it into effect." Although I am about to answer this question, as well as I am able, I cannot say that I have entire confidence in the parties who propose it. People sometimes ask many questions about a work which they greatly dislike, and are strongly inclined to neglect. Still I have not the slightest objection to give this question a plain and direct answer, according to the best of my ability. It must, however, be distinctly understood that my answer refers exclusively to the church, and to the treatment which the young people have a right to expect at her hands, after she has received them into her communion. No doubt parents and schoolmasters and Sunday-school teachers have many duties to perform to the young

decree has gone forth, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat." It is of no use to pray for the conversion and salvation of our children, when they are baptized, if we afterwards refuse to make any inquiry about their consent and intentions, and to afford them the very best helps that we can command to walk in the ways of God, and to find their way to heaven. All that the Church of England does for young people at their confirmation is neither more nor less than what the children themselves became entitled to by their baptism. It is merely what the church is bound to do for them by her own act and deed in having received them into her communion.

Now, let all this be applied to the case of Methodism and of her young people. Our children have been baptized without their own consent. There they are, members of the church, made such, not by themselves, but by the act and deed of the church herself, in obedience to the Divine appointment and command. We know that these children are all born in sin, and that they must be born again. But we do not believe in baptismal regeneration as it is popularly understood. It is not our opinion that the children were born again when they were baptized. Facts are against the notion, and abundantly disprove it. Nor do we believe that any human being is ever born again without his own consent. Many years have passed away since several of our young persons were baptized. Some of them are ten, or twelve, or fourteen

years of age. Everything now depends upon their personal consent. God will assuredly save them, if they are willing to be saved. The church has bound herself to inquire what their intentions are, and whether they mean to be saved. The Church of England gives her young people the best helps and means of salvation that she possesses; and Methodists are bound to do the same. It is a good thing to send young people to school, and to take them to a chapel; but you know that, in order to actual and personal salvation, you have something more to offer them. If you wish anybody to obtain heartfelt religion, you recommend them to go to a class-meeting at once. St. Paul says that he kept back nothing from his hearers that was profitable to them. If you advise young people to do this, that, and the other thing, and say nothing about your class-meetings, you keep back the best helps you have to give. Whether they make use of them or not, you are bound to make an offer of them. We have not prelates in our church; so that we cannot advise our young people to go to them and be confirmed; but we have the ordinance of class-meetings; and we can advise our young people to go there. There are many things that we are unable to do; but this we can do very easily: and this, in a little time, would greatly alter our position in the country, as a religious community, and bring scores of members into our Societies. We want our young people to be asked separately and affectionately whether or not they intend to submit

to Christ ; and if they do, we can advise them to go to a class-meeting every week, as one of the best means of assisting them to fulfil such a purpose.

It will very likely be said, " Our young people will never attend class-meetings ; they utterly dislike them ; and we shall never be able to persuade them to anything of the kind. It is, therefore, of no use to make the attempt." Let it, however, be remembered that the surrender of themselves to Christ is a matter in which both they and ourselves are left without a choice. Infant baptism is an ordinance of God ; and our work is simply to fulfil His intentions, and to obey His commands, in the best manner we are able.

ADDRESS VIII.

THE DANGERS OF DELAY.

CHILDREN and young people are often heard to say, "Why should we concern ourselves with the solemn subject of religion just now? It will spoil our pleasures, interfere with our pursuits, and obscure our prospects of advancement in the world. Besides, such a course is not only inconvenient, but altogether unnecessary. We may repent in old age. Sinners have been pardoned on a sick-bed, and at the very close of life. We may be saved by grace through faith."

In this reasoning, whatever people may think of the conclusions, they are obliged to admit the premises. However they may demur to the inferences drawn, they cannot deny the facts assumed. It is undoubtedly true, that "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" that "His blood cleanseth from all sin;" and that, through Him, all manner of sin and blasphemy may be forgiven.

Manasseh did not fear the Lord in his youth. On the contrary, he threw off all moral restraint ;

he made the streets of Jerusalem run down with blood; he worshipped idols without either shame or concealment; he exceeded in wickedness all the Kings who had reigned in Jerusalem before him. At length he was made a prisoner of war, bound in fetters, and carried to Babylon. There, in his affliction, he sought the Lord, and found Him; and, after committing such enormous sins, and living many years, he became a sinner saved by grace.

The well-known thief upon the cross appears to have run a similar career, and was saved even at a later period of life, and in still more critical circumstances. He was not a Pharisee, but an open sinner, and lived in wickedness until it brought him to an untimely end. He appears to have continued in impenitence until actually nailed to the cross on which he died. Here, however, he became acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ, applied to Him for mercy, proved Him to be merciful and mighty to save; and while hanging in pain and agony, before he died, was cheered by the announcement, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

If these persons were pardoned at the close of life, so may you. It is true, they had been very bad characters; but God's mercy is not regulated by the wickedness of men. You may be forgiven, without going the same lengths in transgression, if you exercise the same repentance and faith.

But, while the case of Manasseh and that of the

thief upon the cross clearly show that you may refuse to fear the Lord in your youth, and yet be saved in old age, and at the close of life, they by no means prove that this will actually be the fact. From these cases it only follows, that, if you repent as Manasseh did, and believe like the thief upon the cross, you will obtain the same forgiveness. But there are many other cases recorded in the Bible, which clearly say to us, "Be not high minded, but fear." It is our wisdom to look forward, not with confidence, but with fear and trembling; since it is possible that those who refuse to fear the Lord in their youth may finish their course in a very different manner.

In the case of the sinners of the old world, the neglect of early religion was not followed by a late repentance, and a pardon bestowed at the close of life. The people of that generation, as they were born in sin, continued to live in sin. Throughout the entire period of childhood and youth, "every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually." In this state of mind they grew up from infancy to manhood; and the consequence was, that the earth became "corrupt before God, and was filled with violence." Yet, after it was said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," and the coming flood had been announced, "the long-suffering of God" still "waited while the ark was a preparing;" which was the long space of one hundred and twenty years. During all this time Noah was "a preacher of righteousness;" but

it seems his sermons failed to bring them to repentance, and to the enjoyment of pardoning mercy. Yet they might assuredly have humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God; for then, as well as now, the Lord "is long-suffering to us-ward, not" being "willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But they had become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. They had been accustomed to do evil, until it was next to impossible to do good. The preventing grace of God had been resisted, until they finally refused an offered cure. God was waiting to be gracious; but they remained like the deaf adder, which stoppeth her ear, until they were utterly destroyed, and that without remedy. If in their case the neglect of religion in early life was not followed by a late repentance, and by pardon at the approach of death, it may not be so in yours. It is therefore clearly your wisdom to seek the Lord while He may be found, to call upon Him while He is near, and to begin to fear and serve Him even in youth.

You are acquainted with the parable of the foolish virgins; and by what happened to them you are farther taught that a life begun in the neglect of religion is likely to end in wailing and gnashing of teeth. These persons went out to meet the heavenly Bridegroom; but they started with empty vessels, although each of them had a lamp in her hand. In other words, they did not fear the Lord from their youth; and, if they professed any reli-

gion at all, it was merely a lifeless and formal thing.

It so happened that an unexpected delay took place ; and it was not until midnight that the cry was heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him." But the lamps of these foolish virgins were gone out ; their vessels were empty ; and they were unprepared to join the bridal procession.

Yet, it seems as if it had been possible, even then, to correct the mistake they had made. At least, that was the opinion of their wiser companions. Accordingly their advice was, "Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." These words plainly assume that by making the very best use of the few remaining moments, these foolish virgins might yet be in time to join the bridal train, and share in the supper which had been provided. But whatever might be possible, and whatever might be the good wishes of their friends, we know what was the melancholy fact.

They began by trifling, they went on to trifle, and they trifled to the end. They went, it seems, to those who had oil to sell, but were so long in procuring a supply, that while they were engaged with the purchase, the Bridegroom came ; they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, "and the door was shut."

Afterwards, indeed, the loiterers came and knocked, but there was no admittance ; and they were compelled to depart into darkness and misery, from which there was no return.

The lesson taught by this sad story is, that religion is a business not to be put off to the end of life, but to be done at its beginning; and that it is the wisdom of all to begin to fear the Lord in the time of youth.

Balaam, the son of Bosor, appears to have been a very cunning man, who thought he might run some risks, and yet take care of himself. It seems, however, that he ventured rather too far. When applied to by the messengers of Balak, he was expressly told by God not to go with them. A plain man would have thought it safe to obey God, and would therefore have remained at home. All simple-minded young people are content to fear God from the time of their youth. But Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness," and very much desired the reward which Balak had promised. So he went a second time to God, and requested leave to go with the men who had been sent. When he had received the Divine permission to follow his own inclinations, he thought he might do so with perfect security. Probably he imagined he had done a great thing when he said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God." Young people often think they do a great deal for God, by attending His house and ordinances, although they refuse to give Him their hearts. That love to the "wages of unrighteousness," which led Balaam so far, led him a little farther; and he gave to the Moabites the wicked advice of laying a snare for the

Israelites, by which they were entangled and overcome. But when all his plans had seemingly succeeded, when he was just on the point of receiving Balak's reward, and concluded he could enjoy this and yet save his soul at last, he met with an unexpected reverse. A war was declared; the Moabites were defeated in a great battle; and the body of Balaam was found among the slain. He was no doubt a very clever man, and fully intended to gain "the wages of unrighteousness," and also to secure the favour of God, and a place among the blessed. But, instead of this, he lost his money and his honour; he lost his life; and he lost his soul. There are many young people who think they are too wise to fear the Lord in their youth. Because they desire the pleasures of this world, they think there is no danger in such a course but such as they can easily avoid; and yet by that desire they are drawn away from God; drawn into sin; and finally drawn into endless perdition.

But suppose it were possible for our young people to enjoy the world, and then escape to heaven; yet they should think of other things beside themselves. They should think of the gracious purposes of God; of the extent to which those purposes have been opposed; and of the blessings which have, in consequence, been withheld from the church and from the world. When the blessed God gave a revelation of His will to the Jews, He expected to be acknowledged and worshipped by them; and that they would have no other gods beside Him.

But in the days of Ahab, the King of Israel, the true God was forgotten, and the people in general were given to idolatry. It was in consequence of this that the Prophet Elijah was authorized to say, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Accordingly it rained not for the space of more than three years, and the people endured the extremes of drought and famine.

Both Judaism and Christianity are intended to promote morals and religion generally, as well as the worship of God in particular. The Gospel is at once the prevention and the cure of moral evil. While it offers a full and free pardon for all that is past, to the sick and the dying, it at the same time restrains all children from running into the same ungodly practices, by bringing them to fear the Lord from their youth.

But this design of the Gospel has been opposed and defeated. Among ourselves the grand ends of Christianity have been frustrated, as truly as the law of Moses was among the Jews. Old people have been willing to accept of a pardon when they were about to dread that they could sin no longer; but children and young people have refused to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live a devout and holy life. Because God has taken so much pains with His vineyard, and been so greatly disappointed as to religious results, He has commanded the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

But you wish for the fulfilment of that promise: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and

floods upon the dry ground." Your desire is, that the little cloud, rising up out of the sea like a man's hand, may spread wider and wider, until the heavens are black with clouds and wind, and there is a sound of abundance of rain. If we would see this, we must cease to oppose the designs of infinite purity and goodness. There must be an end of these notions of sinning while we can, and then obtaining pardon at the last. When children submit to be converted, when people begin to fear the Lord from their youth, then will the Spirit be poured out from on high, and the wilderness blossom as the garden of the Lord. For the honour of God, and for the benefit of the world, we trust you will fear the Lord from your youth.

THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS
CONCERNING
METHODISM AND HER YOUNG PEOPLE.

[THE subjoined extracts are from various manuscripts left by Mr. Jackson, and written during the few last years of his life. The following paragraph will form an appropriate introduction to the rest.]

ALL children are "born in sin;" but some years usually pass away before this principle fully unfolds itself in a wicked life. We wish them to be evangelized *beforehand*. Before they become as wicked as they are ever likely to be in this world, they should hear the Gospel, believe on Christ, and become members of His church. Again, those who are now children will, in time, become men and women. We wish them to be evangelized *beforehand*. Whether their days be many or few, they all belong to the Redeemer, and should all be devoted to Him.

To the question, "How do you mean to carry out this design, and attain what you are seeking?" we reply, frankly and directly, We mean to attain our end by minding *our own business*, and keeping to *our own department*. In the great business of

human salvation, there is the work of *God*, and there is the work of *man*. Both in saving ourselves, and in saving our children, there is something that we are to do, and there is something that God has to do. It is God's work to pardon sin, to give the Holy Spirit, and to convert the human soul: it is man's work to repent of his sin, to believe the Gospel, and to seek the Lord while He may be found. We fully expect that God, according to His promise, will pour His Spirit upon our seed, and His blessing upon our offspring; but our work will be to try to persuade them to use the means which are most likely to lead to this "great salvation." To use the means of grace is the duty of man; to bestow the grace of the means is exclusively the prerogative of God.

THE AGE OF DECISION.

THERE are fifteen years in the lifetime of human beings, during which the realization of God's great design of mercy commonly begins in personal conversion. These are from the seventh to the twenty-first year of age. Evangelical conversion, indeed, often takes place both before and after; but it is found to be effected during the years we have mentioned, far more frequently than at any other period of life. These are the years of transition from the more passive state of childhood, to the exercise of free-will, and the right of deciding and acting for ourselves. Generally speaking, in this important interval, the Gospel offer of salvation is

either accepted or refused ; actual faith or unbelief begins to influence the mind ; and that current sets in which gives direction to the future conduct in this world, and runs into the eternal condition in that which is to come. The space of time, therefore, which lies between childhood and mature age, possesses more than ordinary importance, and loudly calls for all those efforts which tend in any way to form a right moral and religious character. To observant teachers in our schools, it has long been obvious, that, when their pupils pass into their teens, they must either become decidedly religious, or the lessons they have learned will prove practically inefficient, and perhaps be forgotten. No means, therefore, should be omitted which are likely to lead from the school into the church. Classes and Leaders should on no account refuse young people who express a willingness to meet with them, whether at the time they possess any religion or not ; considering how much their eternal state will probably be affected by the connexions they now form, and who it was that once said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not;" even though they were then incapable of choice, and therefore had, properly, no "desire to flee from the wrath to come." Religious persons, who are at once the friends of Methodism and of young people, should seriously and affectionately speak to them on the subject of personal conversion, and the propriety of submitting to Christ, and becoming the sheep of His fold. In

the Church of England, all candidates for Confirmation are questioned, by the presiding Bishop, respecting their purposes and intentions ; and, as this involves the principle of a class-meeting, it should be applied, at least privately, to all the youth connected with Methodism. To leave parties wholly to themselves at this critical age, is a heartless cruelty. A small measure of the dying love of Christ will lead us to take them by the hand, and advise them what is best to be done. When they object to meet in class, they are not to be unduly urged, as the practice is useless without their free and full consent.

A WORD TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES.

WHATEVER may have been the character of your education, if you are now between ten and twenty years of age, and provided you think well of religion, desire to be saved from sin,—to live holily, to act wisely, and to be happy after death,—you cannot do better than begin at once to meet in class. Do this, whether you have any religion or not. If, at present, you have no concern about your soul, meeting in class is very likely to issue in that feeling. If you go to one of these weekly meetings, you will find the members employed very much like the hundred and twenty who remained in Jerusalem from the time of our Lord's ascension until after the day of Pentecost. These all continued, assembled "with one accord in one place,"

engaged "in prayer and supplication," probably singing hymns to Christ, and talking one to another about Him. It is true we live in another country and in a distant age; but we are equally dependent upon Christ, for "neither is there salvation in any other." It is therefore altogether foolish and wrong for people to live in this world and be unmindful of their Redeemer in heaven. For you to join a class is not a mistake, but a wise measure; you will get among religious people; and not only begin, but continue, to think and talk about Him who is now at "the right hand of God."

The best way to learn to walk by faith, and not by sight, is to mingle with those who often speak of spiritual and invisible things. A man who fully intends to emigrate to Australia acts wisely in getting into the company of such as are about to sail for that distant hemisphere. Among them he becomes acquainted with a thousand things, of which he was ignorant before; and is better prepared for his intended voyage, and for his future country. Man is fitted for the duties of this life by mingling with his fellow-men; and if he has any thought of heaven hereafter, his wisdom is to mingle with those who often speak of that city of the living God. We therefore advise you to join the Methodist Society.

A FEW QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

1. WHY do you think it so important that those who have been well and religiously brought up in

our schools should, in addition, become members of our Society ?

Ans. Because, from the entire New Testament, it appears that the fellowship of religious people is manifestly the order of God. He plainly intends travellers to heaven to form themselves into caravans of pilgrims, and to help one another on the road. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." It is obvious that such as make a very good beginning in religion may afterwards grow weary and faint in their minds, and in the end fail of the grace of God. Schools, like sermons, without class-meetings, are likely to be followed by unsatisfactory results. In the "Large Minutes" it is asked, "Is it advisable for us to preach in as many places as we can, without forming any Societies? *A.* By no means. We have made trial in various places, and that for a considerable time; but all the seed has fallen by the highway side. There is scarce any fruit remaining." From the experience of our fathers we conclude, that where we have schools, but no class-meetings connected with them, so far as serious personal religion is concerned, it will in time be found "there is scarce any fruit remaining."

2. Why do you wish the Methodists generally to unite in efforts to save young people ?

Ans. Because they are very numerous, and their case is not likely to be met without union among

the workmen, and a wise division of labour. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." When, however, the adult members of Society are brought to combine, and say one to another, "I will speak to this boy, if you will do the same to that girl," something considerable may be done. If the Methodists, generally, will join in this work, tens of thousands of young people in our community will find an appeal made to their consciences, to which many of them will readily and happily respond. In many instances, we rejoice to know, success has attended the plans already in operation; but where they have failed, we may be allowed to "try again." Since such failures are very numerous, and multitudes of young persons are rapidly passing into maturity without being converted to God, it is quite necessary that further efforts be made, in order, if possible, to prevail on them to decide on a compliance with the overtures of the Gospel.

3. But is such a combination to be defended on any scriptural principle?

Ans. Christian baptism appears to be the first step in the fulfilment of a vast and gracious design. So it was with Jewish circumcision, and baptism is now regarded as occupying the same place among Christians. God says, "I will circumcise thine heart." Outward circumcision was intended to lead to that which is inward, and to all the duties and blessings of a holy life. Christians are said to be "buried with Him by baptism into death; that

like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Baptism is meant to be followed by a spiritual resurrection, and a course of holy conduct. Hitherto the practice among the Methodists has been to administer baptism in the congregation, and then leave others to fulfil its great design. This may have been realized, in some measure, by the instrumentality of parents or teachers; but baptism is a *church ordinance*; and surely it becomes those servants who respect their Master, not merely to begin, and leave others to finish, but themselves to inquire whether or not His gracious intentions have been carried out and fulfilled.

4. But does not all this assume the possibility and desirableness of Methodism being handed down from father to son, and thus made hereditary in certain families?

Ans. It assumes the entire compatibility of the Church of England and genuine Methodism. But this is no novel idea. Everybody knows that the early Methodists deprecated the fact of a separation from the Church. If the two systems are consistent on any point, it is on that of the religious treatment of children. It is well known that the Church of England expects to be supported by the transmission of her principles from generation to generation. She baptizes infants, confirms young people, and in this way looks to be supplied with members, from one age to another. Methodism relies on personal conversion to God. She says to

all sinners, "Ye must be born again." Such as are seeking this blessing are invited to join the Society. These two principles are not opposed, but thoroughly consistent. They may not always be co-extensive. Cases of disappointment and failure are to be expected. But, in a right state of things, infant baptism and religious training will generally lead to personal conversion. In the formalities of the Establishment there is a great religious principle involved, which true Methodism, by God's blessing, will yet render living and efficient. We shall then see many more of those who have been baptized in infancy afterwards choosing to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life."

5. But why do you wish all our young people to be invited to a class-meeting, when possibly some of them may be unconverted, if not unawakened?

Ans. Because, when children have been admitted into the church by the appointment of Christ, their treatment by His servants is to be regulated, not by their pleasure, but by His word. They are bound, by their allegiance to Jesus, to care for these lambs of His flock; to speak to them, and use the most likely means in order to induce them to obey His voice and follow Him. We know of nothing so likely to do this as a Methodist class-meeting. Separately appealing to the conscience involves the great principle of this institution. Beginning with this, and afterwards taking them to a Leader, if found in a proper state of mind, is the most likely

way, known to us, of leading them to personal salvation. In cases of determined refusal, all attempts at coercion are useless and wrong. But whether they will hear or refuse, we shall speak to them affectionately, and invite them to a class, if we love Christ, and expect to meet them with joy in the day of judgment.

6. But why do you urge the Methodists to speak to young people, when there are so many adult sinners in the world?

Ans. Because adults will not always bear direct and personal appeals, but children and young people generally will. Much is also now said of the difficulty of reforming the criminal population of the country. When persons have done wrong once, they often feel a strange inclination to do the same again. The notion of gaining something by a deeper plunge into sin is essentially antinomian. God's command to young and old is, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." The sooner this is done, the more acceptable is our conduct to God, and the more profitable to ourselves.

7. Why do you urge us thus to speak to young people, when there is so little probability of ultimate success?

Ans. Because we attach but little importance to this feeling of despair; since it often springs from no better principle than cowardice and unbelief. When we baptize infants, we pray for their regeneration, and often subsequently for their salvation. After this, to sit still and be silent, is to be incon-

sistent with ourselves. When Moses prayed, as he was coming out of Egypt, God said to him, "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." If our young people are to be saved, there is something to be done by *themselves*, beside the work of the Holy Spirit; and therefore while we call upon God, we must also speak to *them*.

When Methodists combine in this work, it is further probable that large numbers of our youth will be converted, because in all communities there exists a great deal of the spirit of *caste*. In the East Indies, where this prevails, the people move and act very much in bodies; and everywhere human beings influence one another, either for good or for evil. People seldom enter upon a course of life without some reference to those with whom they are most intimately connected. When young people become religious, it is generally in considerable numbers. Companions affect one another, and God overrules all this social intercourse for the accomplishment of His own gracious designs. The more religious children there are, and the more of their companions will be converted; and piety will spread like a fire, which grows in power as it enlarges in extent. In the judgment of many young people, a profession of religion would be regarded as unsuited to their age and circumstances. When it is said that a youth has been converted, people talk as if some strange thing had happened, and many are thus kept back from declaring themselves

on the Lord's side. These feelings, however, would be banished, did the young understand that there existed a vast combination of persons, many of whom were of considerable age and experience, whose avowed object it was to realize the design of infant baptism, and promote conversion in very early life. If there were any timid people in the land of Israel, in the days of Elijah, who were halting between two opinions, because they scarcely knew whether or not such humble persons as themselves ought to contradict the King and the country, by saying they were on the Lord's side; they would feel still more afraid when they heard the complaining Prophet say to his Maker, "Lord, the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant;" "and I, even I only, am left." But to them it would be like life from the dead, when they heard God Himself declare in reply, "Yet I have left Me seven thousand which have not bowed the knee to Baal." And their hands would be still further strengthened if they understood that these "seven thousand" men were combined for the purpose of prevailing upon all timid people like themselves, openly to take the Lord's side. An avowed union for such a purpose, among adult Methodists, would immediately begin to put forth a mighty influence for good upon thousands of our young people.

RESULTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

IN the Newcastle Circuit I have conversed separately with a considerable number of young persons,

chiefly boys from twelve to seventeen years of age. On these occasions I have begun by reminding them that they were baptized when infants, and were thus by their parents given to the Triune God, their Creator and Redeemer. Time, however, had now brought about a great change in their condition. They were now no longer children, but young people, who had a will of their own, and had already begun to decide and act for themselves. Not one of them could be saved without his own consent. Having reached the age of discretion, and become responsible creatures, every one of them must give an account of himself unto God. In conclusion, each youth was asked what he intended to do; whether or not he meant to carry out and fulfil the design of his baptism; and all were called upon to answer that solemn question, "Will ye also be His disciples?"

There was not a single youth so spoken to who evinced, either by word or deed, any hostility or dislike to Christ and religion. Some of them, on the other hand, did not express any decided wish or desire to turn and submit to Him. Religiously, their characters were simply of the negative kind. They said nothing against the Gospel feast, nor expressed any feeling of dislike or contempt for Him who had provided it; but they had no desire, just then, actually to share in the entertainment. Yet even these readily engaged to attend public worship.

Others of these young persons went a step further. Conscience from within at once responded

to this appeal from without. They declared themselves ready, there and then, to submit to the Saviour's authority; to go to a class-meeting; or to attend the Lord's Supper. Some of them have actually done so. The rest have not (for the present) been urged to follow their example; chiefly because there is still a difference of opinion in some quarters, as to whether or not such youths are in a fit state of mind to be received on trial into the Wesleyan Society.

We have heard of other young people who, when appealed to in the same way, have at once avowed their entire surrender to Christ; have gone to a revival-meeting; and there wept and prayed, until they obtained peace with God; and have now entered upon a devout and holy life.

There are many good Methodists, both men and women, not actively engaged in Sunday-schools, who wish young people to become true Christians. They remember some youth, perhaps in their own family, or in some way related to them, or residing in their own neighbourhood, to whom they might speak on the subject of personal religion. If they would resolve to do this, and at once kindly and seriously go to him, and ask what answer he intends to make to the solemn appeal of God,—speak to him of class-meetings and their advantages, and, if in a proper state of mind, introduce him to a suitable Leader,—they might be the instruments of beginning a good work, which would lead to a holy life, and end in the paradise of God.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

WESLEYAN Methodists have attempted to fulfil the design of the Gospel in reference to both adults and children ; but there has been a marked difference as to the results of our labour in the two departments. In the one we have found abundant occasion of gratitude and joy ; but the other has proved a source of disappointment, and often furnished matter of complaint. "Our fathers have declared unto us the noble works" which God did "in their days." Missionaries can report the success of their labours, and tell us how cannibals have been civilized, and idolaters brought to worship the one living and true God. But when we come to inquire into the religious condition of our children at home, though we hear of many individuals who are converted and saved, yet there are vast masses,—thousands and tens of thousands,—who leave our schools and are seldom afterwards seen in our chapels. We hear no more of them, except as a part of the millions who never attend public worship. How is it that our religious system was like another Samson, when grappling with adults of a former age, and is so generally victorious in its conflict with heathenism now, while in dealing with our children it seems shorn of its strength, and is weak and like another man ? This cannot be owing to any change in our doctrine. In this matter there is no difference between Ministers at home and Missionaries abroad. We now teach the same truths that were preached fifty or a hundred

years ago. Yet there is one point which ought to be noticed as accounting, at least partly, for this failure in one case, and this success in the other. With adults the Gospel is allowed to deal directly, and in person; with children it is permitted to have intercourse only indirectly, and by proxy. The fathers of Methodism did not leave it to the regular Clergy, or to anybody else, to evangelize the adult masses. Each man felt this as a burden laid upon his own conscience; and they went themselves to the highways and hedges, into barns and cottages, and proclaimed the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

British Christians do not now leave the heathen to be converted by schemes of colonization. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, West India planters offered to undertake to convert the natives of Western Africa to Christianity. The church of that day left the enterprise to them, not liking to undertake it herself. Everybody knows that the matter ended in the slave-trade. At present, the Gospel is permitted to do this work in its own way. Missionaries are sent out to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," and numbers of them believe and turn unto the Lord.

We have the Gospel among ourselves; and all its ordinances, so far as they are adapted to the case of adults, are duly observed; but for children we provide by other and distinct arrangements. Now and then, indeed, there is a sermon specially addressed to them; but in general our public reli-

gious services are adapted to the case of adults, and to them only. Any other arrangement would scarcely be tolerated. Children are baptized by the church, and admitted publicly into her communion; but their religious training is left to anybody who is willing to undertake it. We may, however, rest assured that the church of Christ owes a duty to baptized children, which nobody can do for her. The Gospel made the church; and until it is allowed to work in its own way, and to make it the constant business of every day to prevent baptized children from ever becoming openly wicked,—as much as it is its business to bring adult sinners to repentance,—we shall never see our youth converted on a scale which comports with the vast designs of God's mercy to mankind.

PREVENTION AND CURE.

It may be conceded that, according to the testimony of all history, evangelical prevention is more difficult than evangelical cure. The entire history of Christianity consists in recounting its power and triumphs over adult heathenism, and then its degeneracy and corruption through the medium of its own children. Throughout entire Europe the Gospel subverted the established idolatry, and occupied its place. In many nations, however, Christianity degenerated into Popery, and became a system of priestcraft and immorality. Protestantism, at the Reformation, was able to shake the Papacy to its centre, and delivered several nations

from its blighting dominion. But, in many places, it soon became a form without a power, and a name rather than a reality. In all these cases Christianity was eminently successful in the cure of many deadly moral evils ; but, as a means of anticipating and preventing others, it has seemed to be powerless and a failure. Methodism, by God's blessing, has displayed a wonderful power in this country in the way of converting and reclaiming an ungodly people. Whether or not it is equally able to foresee and prevent in children such evils as it has notoriously cured in adults, remains to be seen ; and on that point there may be different opinions. But, allowing that to prevent evil is more difficult than to cure it, and that it is easier to convert an adult profligate than to restrain a child from folly and sin ; still it by no means follows that this last is *impossible*. It may be difficult,—it may be most difficult ; but all things are possible to God ; and whoever will obey His commands shall see His salvation. It is according to His arrangement that children are baptized in infancy ; and He has directed the Gospel to be preached to every creature. Honest attempts to obey Him are always crowned with success, even when He has commanded things which were difficult, or seemingly impossible. Let us, then, in the words of Mr. Wesley, “review the whole affair.” What is the will of God, and what is the design of the Gospel ? We know that it provides for men a complete pardon and an entire sanctification. Does it at

the same time seek to prevent in children those evils which in an adult it proposes to cure? If so, then a truly Christian church is the Gospel in action; and the religious care of children ought to be part and parcel of its established usage and economy. It must provide for both adults and children, and give to each their portion of meat in due season. Very likely, in order to bring our plans into entire harmony with the Gospel, and before we carry out and fulfil the designs of its Author, we shall all have to submit to some change in our habits. Change is always irksome, especially to aged people. But it is always the best for man honestly to seek to fulfil the Divine intentions. We may have our discouragements; but when we seek the pleasure of the Lord, it will be sure to prosper in our hands.

VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF CLASS-MEETINGS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

CLASS-MEETINGS, it is said, are merely human inventions, and therefore ought not to be made a test of church-membership. Nothing should be made a test of church-membership but what is enjoined in the Scriptures, and is of Divine authority and obligation.

But it should always be remembered that church-membership itself, with all its tests, is but a *means* in order to an *end*. That end is salvation from sin, a restoration to the favour and image of God, and a preparation for His eternal joy. Now, provided

the end is attained, we shall not be asked about the terms of Christian communion, or even as to the church to which we belonged. While, on the contrary, although we had been members of the most perfect church on earth, the terms of communion with which were of the most scriptural kind,—if we were not pardoned, and sanctified, and made meet for heaven, we should, at last, be “turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God.” The Jews belonged to the true church, and all its terms of membership were strictly scriptural. But with many of them the great end of this arrangement, which was in a moral sense to bring the soul to God, was not attained. The Laodiceans belonged to the pure and apostolic church, and held communion with it on the most scriptural terms. Yet they were not saved from sin; for, in truth, and in the judgment of God, they were “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Thousands of people in this country, a hundred years ago, were members of the National Church, in which the word of God was preached, and the sacraments duly administered. But they were not saved from sin; for they continued, year after year, to sink deeper into irreligion and the spirit of the world. On the other hand, it is an indubitable fact, that when many of these people began to attend class-meetings, they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The great design of the Gospel, and the end for which

its Author came into the world, was to "save His people from their sins." If this be not attained, to whatever church we belong, and on whatever terms we may be connected with it, so far as we are concerned, "Christ is dead in vain." On the other hand, God says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" and if holiness be possessed, though it be in connexion with class-meetings, the Gospel has proved to us "the power of God unto salvation." Our Lord speaks of some persons who appear to have been members of His church, and were probably connected with it on the most scriptural terms; and yet on the last day they awoke, as out of a profound sleep, only to discover that they were excluded from His kingdom. Had they attended a class-meeting, they might not merely have found out that, with all their ability to do "wonderful works," they were yet in their sins; but have made this discovery while there was yet time to avert so great a calamity.

Again, we read in the Gospel of a man found without "a wedding garment," who, when questioned on the subject, proved to be speechless, and was cast into outer darkness. This undoubtedly refers to proceedings at the last day, when many professing Christians discover, that, after all their connexion with the church, they are unfit for heaven. Had this man attended a class-meeting, he might there have ascertained his deficiency, applied to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and been prepared to meet Him at His coming.

The five foolish virgins went out to meet the Bridegroom ; and yet, when He appeared, they were not prepared to join His train, and were excluded from the marriage supper. Had they attended a class-meeting, they might have seen that their vessels were empty, obtained a supply of oil, and thereby escaped all the shame and sorrow which afterwards came upon them.

It is of but little use to find out that Jesus Christ does not know us, when it is for ever too late to regain His favour ; to be told that we must "depart," because we have not on "a wedding garment," when we have no longer an opportunity of procuring one ; or to ascertain that our "vessels" are empty, and our "lamps gone out," when it is utterly impossible to obtain a supply of oil. Such a discovery should be made beforehand, while there is yet sufficient time to have this great deficiency supplied. In order to this, we wish our people to meet in class, and at once to turn their attention to the business of seeking present acceptance with God. He is not a variable, but an unchangeable, Being. What pleases Him now will please Him in the day of judgment ; and if we at present live in His favour, He will then say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

When people meet in class, they learn to defer to the Divine authority, and to inquire what is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them. People do many things, from one day to another, about which it is not necessary that they should

ask any human being whether it be right or wrong ; whether they should do it or not : for no man has any authority over them. But then, as God is their Master, and they must give an account of themselves unto Him, it is quite proper that they should stop and inquire what is *His* will in the matter. By meeting in class, we are likely to be brought so near to God, and to obtain such a knowledge of Him, that we shall respect His authority, and ask what *He* would have us to do.

People who meet in class are also likely to make a right use of the message of mercy from God, which is contained in the Bible. If a number of prisoners, under sentence of death, were to receive a gracious message from the Queen, promising them first a conditional pardon, and afterwards conditional promotion in the service of the government, very likely they would assemble and consult about the meaning of this message. They would both think themselves, and ask the opinion of others, as to what they should do in order that Her Majesty's intention might be fulfilled, and that they might secure the benefit offered to their acceptance. A message of mercy has been sent to us by the God of heaven, offering us present pardon and eternal life, on certain conditions. So long as we merely read this message, but have no questions to ask about it, and seek no assistance to enable us to understand its meaning and realize it in our own experience, so long are we likely to neglect and trifle with this great salvation.

Every young person has a conscience, which tells him it is right he should become the servant of Christ. It is true he has many inducements to a contrary course, and is strongly urged to follow "the devices and desires of his own heart," and to "walk according to the course of this world." But, as soon as ever he has made up his mind to obey the dictates of his conscience, to imitate Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who chose to die rather than do that which they knew to be wrong, he will then look out for religious companions, and say, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God."

As Methodists, we honestly believe that the very best thing any person can do, whether young or old, who wishes to save his soul, is to begin to meet in class. We do not mean to say that we wish all young people to do this, indiscriminately, and without any reference to their state of mind. Persons who dislike such meetings are not likely to be benefited by being compelled to attend them. Besides, they may be in such a state of mind, that no class would be willing to receive them; and it would be better for themselves that they should keep away. What we mean is, simply, that all young persons should be asked and invited to meet in class: if they are willing, they should be assisted and encouraged. If in an unfit state of mind, they can but be left where they now are. A solemn question is asked by the Church of England in connexion with the rite of Confirmation: we wish the same question to be put to all the young people

connected with Methodism ; and when a favourable answer is received, we seek a guarantee for the fulfilment of that promise by the parties going at once to a class-meeting. There are many members of our Society who might engage in this work, and thus lead young people to Christ and salvation. Those who have already entered upon it have met with such a reception, and have seen such results, that they are strongly inclined to go forward, and fully expect greater things yet.

The theory of the Church of England does not take it for granted that her young people are to grow up in ignorance and sin, and then be reclaimed and brought to repentance by the extraordinary exertions of her Ministers. But children are baptized when infants, confirmed at a proper age, and thus prepared for the holy communion. In this way her membership is to be perpetuated, and the Church herself sustained from generation to generation. It is true this theory has broken down ; for it has not practically resulted in the spread of true religion, and the perpetuation of a pious community. But then, it should be remembered, there are no *class-meetings* in the National Church ; and that there this particular mode of dealing with the human conscience is unknown. But let the institutions of a living Methodism be brought to bear upon our young people,—let them be taken, not merely to our chapels and schools, but led on to our class-meetings,—and they will soon be made to feel their moral responsibility, fear the God with whom

they have to do, accept of His mercy, and become sinners saved by grace.

Anything short of this does not meet the necessity of the case ; but true, living religion may begin in childhood, as well as at any later period of life, and give the same proofs of the divinity of its origin.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS,
RELATIVE TO
THE RELIGIOUS TREATMENT AND CONVERSION
OF CHILDREN.

December 8th, 1854.

ALTHOUGH I have only a minute or two, I will not stay until to-morrow, to mention to you a subject on which I have lately thought a good deal, and which to me appears essential to the success of our good cause. It is the subject of *statistics*. These we *must* have, and know exactly how our Sunday-schools are working,—what the results are likely to be,—and what we have to expect.

Out of one hundred men, now twenty years of age, an actuary can tell how many will probably live to be threescore years and ten. Observation and figures will enable us to say how many children, trained in a given way, will be likely to become true Christians. It will be a long work. Something must be done every year. We must deduce, from the numbers of our schools and members, certain rules. Do you know anybody, who sympathizes in our movement, who would undertake this work? We ought to have a Statistical Society.

February 4th, 1856.

It has struck me that we shall do well to keep up the idea of "extension," in connexion with our plan of operation. God's plan is extension. Methodists like the idea of extension. Wesleyanism has met with uncommon extension, upon the whole, notwithstanding all its disasters. "Home Missions" are adult extension; ours is infant extension. Both are parts of God's plan, by which He seeks to make His Gospel "cover the face of the earth;" and no section of the church, commissioned to evangelize the world, has any right to drop either one or the other. Ours does not supersede the Home-Missionary movement, but co-operates with it; and "two are better far than one."

I begin to think that hitherto we have neither skilfully used, nor sufficiently used, the facts of Scripture. The Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, made the people "hear every man in his own tongue the wonderful *works* of God." Facts should be *fully* and *exactly* stated, both in the school and in the pulpit. Each fact should be connected with an abstract principle, either of doctrine or duty. Children like facts or stories; older people delight in inferences.

June 25th, 1856.

BE sure to introduce baptism into all your addresses on combination. The minds of baptized children are still in a state of suspense; for they are

not old enough to decide for themselves, and personally to choose Christ and His offers of mercy. These are generally ignored, but ought to be recognised and addressed. To fulfil the ends of baptism, rather than to teach the same lesson, should be the great hinge and pivot of our combination.

I expect, as the result of our movement, nothing sudden. But truth gains by discussion; and as baptism came from God, the more it is considered, the more will be done by all parties to convert children: and the more we do that, the more will the Holy Ghost be given, and we shall see greater things yet. Go on, and God bless you!

August 4th, 1856.

PERHAPS somebody may praise us after we are dead; but all will then depend upon the manner in which we stand before another tribunal. The Lord help us!

I am glad to find that your heart is still in your work. But we are not yet right, and never shall be, until we can bear down all opposition, "like mighty winds, or torrents fierce."

I have carefully read over all the proceedings of the Committees, and retain my old opinion still. Methodism has not yet the right method of evangelizing children.

The Government plan of education is, in its essence, another attempt to revive the old plan of making

the world morally right by intelligence. But it will not do. Children must be "born again," in the old-fashioned way.

We are right in beginning with baptism, and trying to carry out and fulfil its great design. Does it not follow from this, that *all* baptized children should be examined? In baptism they are brought into the church by the act of other people; should they not, at some time, be *asked* how far they are willing to become members by their own personal consent? Should not this be done by the Ministers? The principle of the Church of England is, that young people are to be examined by the Bishop: I feel disposed to press this point. But it is an incipient resolution.

August 29th, 1856.

THE great principle of our movement it is necessary to consider, and to re-consider, that we may thoroughly comprehend its nature, be fully agreed between ourselves, and entirely satisfied, on rational grounds, that we are right. Between ourselves and our brethren the great difference appears to be this: They seek to repair the injury done by a neglected baptism; we seek to take up at first, and carry out, the great design of baptism itself. God, by arranging for children to be baptized in infancy, plainly tells us to begin to seek their salvation as soon as they are born, and persevere till they are saved.

All leaving of children to themselves is a clear mistake. They are to be brought under the discipline of Christ, and to be under constant supervision of some sort, until they submit to Him.

Some account must be kept of their attendance at chapel. We must know when they are present, and when absent.

How is this to be done? Yet we must not attempt too much. Even little children are all free-willers; and if held by a tight rein, they will break away from all restraint.

Still, though with silken cords, they must be held under some check and control. Again we ask, "How is this to be done?" The man who can devise a truly evangelical check, to which depraved children can be brought generally to submit, will deserve a gold medal, whether he get it or not. There *must be* these "bands of a man," whether we can find them or not. For when God appointed children to be baptized, He knew that the means existed of prevailing upon them to put their necks into the yoke of Christ. How are we to hold them till they yield Him their hearts?

November 13th, 1856.

You say at —— they have had a "sweeping revival" among children. In that I rejoice. There is often much of God in what the Methodists call a "revival." It is, however, essentially, an appeal to the

emotions. The sight of ten or twelve praying penitents is the most affecting spectacle that a human being ever sees. But then, when this is once over, it is not until after some time that he sees it again.

An appeal to the conscience, however, may be made in a quiet way; to an individual; continued all the year round; and from one year to another. Children need a kind of revival which will go on without interruption for ever. This is our special department. We are to ask every elder child what he means to do. He cannot be saved without his own consent. We must therefore lay the entire burden of his salvation upon his own conscience; and leave the matter with himself.

Every youth in Methodism ought to have this private and personal appeal made to him. There are many elderly, wise, and pious people among us, who could do a great deal. In order to employ all our available means, we want a system, and public meetings, and addresses, to spread information, to increase our agency, and every year to subdue, by the power of the word and Spirit of God, the hearts of some thirty, forty, or fifty thousand children and young people. All this strikes me as a perfectly practicable enterprise, with the help of the good Christian people who at present have not very much else to do.

To be frank, I am now full of a "mission to children." Mere schools, we see, do not bring them to Christ fast enough.

November 21st, 1856.

WE are making now a great experiment, and I feel rather solemn and anxious about the result. We are all born in sin, and are altogether as an unclean thing. Yet there is a conscience in every human being, whether we can harmonize these facts in a theory or not.

Speaking to young people in their teens, separately, is an appeal to the conscience of each "in the sight of God." Now, if the conscience is really reached and awakened by this process, it must become a new principle of action, and be followed by altered conduct, as with the people referred to Acts x. 35.

In this neighbourhood three or four lads have promised to join the Society, and between twenty and thirty have joined *classes of hearers*, and have their attendance at chapel regularly marked.

Revivals often do much good ; but it is notorious that they endure for a time only, and then come to an end. We want something that will continue from day to day, and go on for ever. A revival involves an appeal to the emotions, and can only take place when many are united in action and feeling. But things are always right or wrong, whether there be few or many people ; and an appeal to the conscience may be made by *any* man or woman, at *any* time, and in *any* place.

November 27th, 1856.

My notion about all matters of duty is, that while one says, "This is right," and another, "That is wrong," every man must listen to his conscience in the sight of God. The church has surely had enough of religious people learning their duty one from another. In this country, some religious people have thought there was no harm in smuggling, and in taking bribes at elections; and in America they deem it right to promote revivals, and say nothing against slavery. But this won't do.

To me it appears that the true faculty to be appealed to in the case of young people is *conscience*. Revivals are essentially appeals to the affections. But people, we see, can feel very deeply about religion, and, after all, act very oddly. I don't want to be at the head of a movement for making children weep; but to bring them to fear God, and do what is right.

Appeals to the affections, and also to the reason, may both do good; still, our great business is with the conscience. "God's commands are right, and you know it."

This appeal can be made by *any* body, at *any* time, and in *any* place. The sooner it becomes universal, the better. What I am chiefly anxious about, at present, is, to test a principle. We are engaged in a great experiment. I am not concerned to have this made extensively, provided it is done solidly. If it be ascertained that considerable

numbers of children can be so appealed to, that they will "choose whom they will serve," and show their submission to God, either by joining the Society, or by attending public worship, a great point is gained. It will then be, Now for a mission to children!

January 15th, 1857.

LAST night I sent two boys from our Sunday-school to a class-meeting. This morning I have seen the Leader; and he expresses himself as satisfied with these boys, and hopeful as to their future course. This will encourage me to try again; so now we have made a beginning. May God direct and help us!

Christianity was intended by its Author to convert all mankind: literally, to change the moral character of all nations, all families, and all individuals. This appears from Matt. xiii. 33; Hab. ii. 14; Isai. xl. 5; Acts iii. 26; Heb. viii. 11.

All the means hitherto employed in spreading the Gospel, both at home and abroad, have succeeded in converting but a very small portion of the human race. This is notorious. While, therefore, we ought not to give up any long-tried method of bringing sinners to God, we are bound to try every new project that is likely, in any degree, to carry out more fully God's gracious design, which is to make this a religious world, and sanctify the entire population of the earth. People say this is impos-

sible to be done. But if it be the design of God, our business is to aim at this result; and the nearer we get to it the better.

January 29th, 1857.

WHILE thinking about our great work this week, it has appeared to me that the religion of the people of this country is fearfully antinomian. What religious knowledge there is in the country must have come from the pulpits of the land. But, be this as it may, the popular mind is leavened with antinomian principles. Most admit the need of repentance and conversion; but they connect it with the close of life. Conversion in youth or in childhood is thought to be very well, but not at all necessary, nor even very desirable,—quite a work of supererogation. Many people want religion to die with, and for the next world; few want it to live with, and especially in youth.

All this appears to me to be essential antinomianism. Popery led the way in this corruption of the popular mind. It talks of the sacraments of the church; leaves people to live as they please; and then ships them off to the next world, to do as well as they can. Protestantism has come after it, but has left the same impression on the public mind. Everybody will deny this charge, and repel it with indignation; but the facts remain. The pulpit is the teacher of the national mind, and the masses

are antinomians. They will even sing Wesleyan hymns at funerals, but seldom dream of an early conversion. Our City and Home Missions all seek the conversion of adults; but little is said about children. Yet the character of the child is not only that of the future man, but fixes the condition of the spirit in the disembodied state. This state of things cannot be right.

You find that revivals arise out of solemn appeals to conscience. This is not to be wondered at; and so go on, in the name of God. Great pains ought to be taken, especially in childhood, to educate this faculty of the human mind. Conscience,—what is that? It is a something in the soul of man which may be improved by instruction; for a nominal Christian has more conscience than a heathen. It is too often ignorant and mistaken; still, its decisions are to each individual as the very voice of God Himself. God has told every child that it is wrong to tell a lie, as really as He ever said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." If children were made acquainted with the mistakes into which conscience is liable to fall, and invariably taught to revere its decisions as the voice of God to them, they would be brought by thousands to surrender themselves to Christ in early life, and make the best Methodists in the world.

I am glad you approve of my notion of the need of children being brought into Society, on trial, and kept on trial, if needful, for seven years. Press this

everywhere. It ought to be done, and will save us from some mistakes into which we have formerly fallen. You see, I give you many opinions and speculations, but not many facts. The truth is, I am much of a prisoner at present. Whether my heart be right or not, I have increasing confidence in my principles, and shall certainly put them to a still further test.

March 12th, 1857.

I WISH you would give me in your next just an outline of the train of argument and observation you generally pursue in dealing with those you meet and talk with. God has opened to us a great door of access to our young people. They may assuredly be converted on a large scale. We must not trifle with the opportunity. We may do something; but shall not accomplish, by ourselves, what needs to be done. Means must, therefore, be used to associate others with us in the good work. There ought to be very many labourers. Possibly we may fail to get anybody to help us, and the work may languish and stand still. At any rate, we should *try* to make "a flame" aspire, "kindled by a spark of grace." What is the best way to get on? I think of this by day and by night, and cannot dismiss from my mind the idea of a "Mission to unconverted youths." You and I might form it, hold meetings, or try in any way to get helpers

who would speak to young people, lead them to Christ, and get them into Society. Say something about this matter; for it sits upon me like a nightmare, and I wish for deliverance. How Methodists should write so earnestly about educating children, and do so little to convert young people, is beyond my comprehension.

April 9th, 1857.

DWELL much on the idea that all the older Churches have, in one form or another, the rite of Confirmation, which is always preceded by an Examination. We want not the Confirmation, but the Examination. It is one of the strangest things in the world that we are bringing up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and never afterwards inquire into the moral effect of all we have done, by an appeal to their consciences, and asking them what they mean to do. I enclose a paper containing some rough thoughts which I have put down. What do you think of having some printed and given away, wherever meetings are held? I am at present so full of the practice of all the old Churches, and so convinced that what Methodism wants is a serious and affectionate religious Examination, about the age of Confirmation, of all our young people, that I have written as much as would make a small pamphlet about it. Old Churches often lay a death's hand upon the

head of their youth. Methodism does nothing in the way of examining her baptized children.

May 13th, 1857.

HITHERTO I have not even the shade of a misgiving about our being substantially right, as far as we go. Conscience is the faculty in man to which the Gospel appeals, to which the old Methodist Preachers appealed, and to which we must appeal, if we are to do any good religiously. It is true, the world is continually changing, and we live in an age more enlightened and better educated than that which went before it. Still, conscience is the judge in all moral questions; and to it our appeal, as well as that of our fathers, must always be made. But there is a deal of talk about appealing to conscience, which is good for nothing. We must appeal to it as Nathan did to David, as Paul did to Agrippa, as Luther did to the people of Germany, and as Knox did to Mary Queen of Scots. It must be a thunder at the gates, which makes the house to shake, and is likely to force open the doors, that will gain attention. The sleep of conscience is sometimes profound; but, when she awakes, she feels that God is near; and if she speak at all, it will be by His authority.

June 25th, 1857.

MANY children and young people among the Methodists have but a dull sense of moral obligation. Conscience tells them they have done and said and thought many things which are morally wrong; but they regard this as a trifle, and soon forget it, until judgment draws near. This, in my opinion, is the foundation of all our mischief. The hymn says,—

“O may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul.”

Moral obligation, unfelt in childhood, becomes duller in after life. Should we not do something to awaken this moral sense? Tell me what you think on this point.

July 9th, 1857.

My opinions remain much the same, and are likely to be unchanged; and most probably, without doing much good in the world, will die with me, and be buried in my grave. Everybody seems satisfied with things as they are. The entire country rings with the sound of schools, in order to *educate* children; but few seem to think that the Gospel has anything to do with these young sinners, or that the Christian church has anything to do in the business, or that the principles and arguments of Christianity can have any influence upon those who are to carry on the busi-

ness of all this world in the next generation. Yet, surely God does not intend things to go on to the end of time as they now are in this country. It is not His intention that children should be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," then become worldly, and, *after* a time, be converted and saved. Any *external* arrangement will *not* do the business. We must get more fully into the philosophy of the matter, understand what is in man, and how to convert children, as we never yet have done. Have you made any fresh discoveries? How do you feel just now?

August 6th, 1857.

I DO unfeignedly rejoice that, on your account, the Conference has come to such a decision. Yet I confess that, to some extent, I rejoice with trembling. I say of this decision, that it "is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes." But increased opportunities imply greater responsibilities; and if our success in the next year be not something considerable, we shall offend God, and bring dishonour upon ourselves. May the Lord help us rightly to improve our increased advantages! Should our lives be spared another year, there are one or two things connected with our work that must be done.

1. If there is anything of God in the plan of appealing to the conscience of each young person, then this can be successfully done by other people

as well as by yourself. Means must, therefore, be used to extend this plan of operation, and get as many good people as possible, both men and women, to engage in the same work.

2. An account must be kept of all the young people who have begun to meet in class, and were not so doing before a serious appeal was made to them on the subject ; so that we may know what we are doing, and be able to report progress, be it rapid or slow. What is to be done to attain these ends ?

Under the word "moral" I always include "religious;" and my present conviction is, that what young people in this country chiefly want is moral education,—to have the conscience thoroughly awakened, and to be made to see and feel their solemn responsibility to God. Nearly all schools have been trying to give children knowledge, thinking that mere ignorance is the cause of all misconduct ; and the result is, they are grown into practical heathens, rather than into sincere Christians. It strikes me, that to rouse the conscience on a large scale is perfectly possible. We shall now have an opportunity of trying what can be done. We must, therefore, think, and pray, and work,—and work, and pray, and think ; and may God direct and help us !

All the questions that come before the Conference, considered in their bearing upon the church and the world, appear to me as trifles compared with this,—Whether or not it is possible for children to be deeply, generally, and religiously awakened, and how is it to be done ?

October 15th, 1857.

THERE assuredly is a way of baptizing human beings in infancy, and then of seeing the design of that ordinance carried out and fulfilled, in true regeneration and living religion, without any intervening and dreary interval of ignorance and ungodliness. This may be the case with the great bulk and majority of children, if the proper means be used.

Whether or not we have found out this way, facts alone can determine. We must, therefore, have naked and certain facts stated ; and if our present mode will not do, we must "try again." In the course of fifteen years, say from seven to twenty-one years of age, every human being passes from the purely passive state of childhood, to the exercise of free-will, and begins to decide and act for himself. Then it is with him, "Now or never." If ever he is evangelically converted to God, it is after his own voluntary choice and acceptance of the Gospel offer of salvation. No education, no treatment, will ever lead to inward religion, if it do not influence his will, and lead him to "choose life," that he may live. I think Methodism is defective as it is at present administered ; but facts alone can prove it.

November 5th, 1857.

MY persuasion is, that Methodism is now in a position to solve a great problem in the evangeliza-

tion of the world,—the way to transmit living religion from generation to generation. On this point the church has long been right in principle, but short in practice. To go no farther back than the Reformation. The Protestants resolved right, when they undertook to baptize all the infants in the country, and train them up to be Christians. But they knew not how to do it, failed in the attempt, and the nation became irreligious and immoral. Methodism was a great reaction on the Home-Missionary principle. It sought to reclaim those profligate adults who had been baptized while infants. But it was obviously preposterous to think of going on in this way to the end of the chapter. Had it not been for the Sunday-school movement, Methodism itself, like all previous systems, had been paralysed by this time.

Our Sunday-schools met the case in part, but only in part. They were never rightly and heartily taken up by the adult church. So the poor children were instructed for a time; and then, being left to themselves, they wandered out of the right path. In the mean time, the Sunday-schools affected independence, and talked of "moral amelioration," without converting children to God, and making them Methodists. But this was a dream.

The very existence of our Catechumen Committee is the avowal of a right principle. It declares to everybody that Sunday-scholars are the catechumens of the church. They are candidates for all the blessings contemplated in their baptism.

All we now want is an agency to give practical effect to this great principle.

By appointing infant baptism, Christ has gone before everybody, in the work of saving souls. His people have only to follow His example; to go before the young; allure, invite, and advise them to go forward to pardon and to heaven.

January 7th, 1858.

I SEND you a copy of a question which I have proposed to some of our Leaders here, and which will give you an idea of the thoughts which at present occupy my mind.

TO A WESLEYAN CLASS-LEADER.

“If elder children, or young people, are brought to you, who are properly, but merely, *willing* to meet in class, will you receive them, and allow them to remain on trial, until they have decided whether to choose Christ or refuse Him?”

If we send young people to a Leader without his being aware of their coming to his class, they are sure to meet with a repulse, sooner or later; and an outcry will be raised that we are going to swamp the classes by a swarm of children. This will be prevented by speaking to the Leader beforehand, and gaining his consent. I begin to suspect that something of this kind may have happened to some of the youths who have promised you to go to class.

Then, I think that young persons should be invited and urged to go to a class-meeting, and received as soon as they are *willing* to go. I begin to think a great deal about *willingness* to attend, and think all such young persons ought to be received on trial, whether they have any other qualification or not. It is very desirable to know, not only how many have actually gone to a class, but also how they act and frame since they began to meet. We must not make more haste than good speed; nor get a number of young creatures into Society who are not likely to be made morally better by the process. But if our elder scholars, generally, are affectionately invited to a class; if they are received on trial when willing to attend; if that is made the Wesleyan mode of Confirmation, and young people are asked repeatedly, "Do you become the servant of Christ by your own personal consent?" and are found to say, "I do," and act accordingly;—then what a prospect opens before us! Meditate on this, and then tell me how you think and feel.

February 18th, 1858.

Our present business is to aim simply at a moral end, and to seek its attainment on two principles.

1. We have to awaken, in the minds of young people, a deep practical sense of moral responsibility. Whatever children become in after life, they must have the conviction fixed in their minds, like a nail

in a sure place, that "God will bring every work into judgment."

Whether they be poor or rich, when men and women, they must fear God and keep His commandments.

2. This end is to be sought on the principle of appeals made to the children themselves. Every one of them has a conscience; and when that is rightly appealed to, as we are now doing, many of them will say to Jesus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

3. Children are volatile and changeable; and, unless they are under some religious control and guidance, their goodness will be but as the morning cloud. They need religious protection from the days of infancy until they are twenty years of age. But, during these years, their religious guides will change, and one succeed another. At least, these will be parents, school-teachers, and Class-Leaders. Now, unless these concert together, and enter into mutual explanations and engagements, the children are likely to suffer loss. If they ever get together, and begin to talk about the religion of children, one will very likely say to another, "I will do my very best to prepare that child, at the proper time, to pass into your hands;" and it will be said in reply, "Whenever you think it right to recommend and send him on to me, I will gladly receive him, and do my best to lead him on to Christ and heaven." At present, we have teachers'-meetings, and Leaders'-meetings, and other sorts of meetings; but

they all meet apart, and by themselves. Our business must be to get them all together, or as many as we can, in order that they may concert with each other about the religion of children; and this will be to our youth like life from the dead. Be sure to collect facts about such as have answered to the appeal made, and have begun to meet in class.

February 25th, 1858.

WHAT do you think of the following scheme? for you see I hatch a fresh one almost every week.

1. Children, like the poor, are "always with us."

2. The conduct of Christ plainly says to His people, that, amidst all their efforts to reclaim adult heathens at home and abroad, they are not to overlook "little children."

3. Therefore, let there be in every Circuit some central power, a committee, or an individual, who has the entire confidence of the Society, appointed to attend specially to the religion of children.

4. Its agents may be old or new; but they should seek to awaken the conscience of each child by private and personal appeals, where necessary, and to introduce him to church-fellowship.

5. All existing agencies for the benefit of children, such as schools of all sorts, may remain undisturbed, and go on in their own way.

In this arrangement you will perceive the main point is to get at the conscience of a child, and to

awaken within him the sense of moral responsibility to God; which is the thing our Rules refer to as a "desire to flee from the wrath to come."

Indeed, without this, very few children would be willing even to meet in class; nor would they, although members of Society, do any good, either to us or themselves. With this feeling once excited within them, they would become docile and pliable; willing to join the Society; and moral in their conduct. It is unreasonable to expect that this moral sense will ever be awakened without the use of proper means. At present, none appear so likely as personal appeals, especially when privately made. A child is damaged for ever, if sent out into the world destitute of this keen sense of moral responsibility.

I have a notion that conscience will be far more generally awakened when we know the right way of getting at it. What is your opinion of the probability of success on this point? Much is said about the best way of disposing of such as are already awakened; whether they should go into catechumen classes, or go at once into Society. But this dispute assumes that already every conscience is aroused that we can reasonably expect to awaken. This I greatly doubt. Any plan of action that does not provide for the more general awakening of children, is, in my opinion, essentially defective. Tell me all you think and feel on this subject.

Then, as to getting awakened children into Society. It is too much to assume that, when left

entirely to themselves, children will choose the best course to be taken. Many are now *out* that ought to be *in* the Society; and, if they were, it would be better both for themselves and others. What do you say?

March 4th, 1858.

SOME people recommend intermediate or catechumen classes, and others think it advisable for young people at once to become members of Society. It is of little consequence by what process they are led, provided they do but ultimately become pious members of the church.

All this is merely disposing of young persons after they are awakened; but the main point, and the most difficult, is to get them awakened. Unawakened souls are of little use, either to themselves or other people; whether they join the Society or not. If all children are born in sin, they enter the world with a conscience fast asleep, instead of being awake to all the solemn realities connected with the moral government of God. In that slumber they remain until aroused by the charitable teachings of Christian friends. When conscience opens its eyes, and the child sees that God will certainly punish the breaches of His moral law, then the individual begins to feel, and inquires, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" Then he can be usefully led anywhere, and is fully prepared for voluntary fellowship

with the adult church. Infant baptism points to all this. Every baptized child is made a member of the church, so far as he can be such without his own consent. God puts him there for the express purpose of his being instructed and awakened. He is surrounded by Christian people, that they may make him understand and feel that he is under a moral Governor, who "will bring every work into judgment." This, therefore, is what Christian people are to do for every child brought among them by baptism. They are to go on making successive appeals to his conscience, until he is awakened to feel his responsibility. A child eight, ten, or twelve years of age is just as capable of all this as any older person whatever.

What a pity it is that Christians will not try God's method of making sinners into saints, instead of complaining that there are so many bad people in the world!

March 11th, 1858.

You never hit the nail more exactly on the head than when you said, as in your last, that the business of Sunday-school teachers is to awaken the moral sense. This sense is possessed by a child, as well as by an adult, and may be awakened in the former quite as easily as in the latter; perhaps even more so; since, wherever conversion is delayed, the heart becomes "hardened through the deceitfulness of

sin." I hope that, wherever you go, you will continue appealing to the conscience ; and everywhere let it be known, that, since morality and religion are the main parts of education, so a child may be quite as readily converted as an adult can be.

I met a number of men this afternoon, who had been working for the parish, and who, together with their families, were in deep distress.

Most likely, when these people had good wages, they were very extravagant, and now they would at any time tell a lie in order to get a penny ; and hence the hearts of all were closed against them : were they but moral and religious, and could people but believe what they say, there would soon be an end of their want of bread. Even with regard to this world, morality is the principal thing to be taught to a child, as that will be most conducive to his well-being. Now a child may become religious. It is more easy to convert him in childhood, than it will ever be afterwards, however long he may live. Whenever he is made awake to the moral government of God, he will feel " a desire to flee from the wrath to come," and be then eligible for admission into the Society, or for anything else. These things proclaim as upon the house-tops. Were it once admitted by the Methodists,—in their pulpits, in their schools, in their class-meetings, and everywhere else,—that a child may be converted just as readily as a man or woman, a mighty improvement would rapidly follow. But this is a point which some Methodists do not thoroughly believe. Preach-

ers are afraid to say so, and parents and teachers regard the intelligence as too good to be true. However, the Bible is on your side; and so work away, until this evangelical truth is acknowledged throughout the length and breadth of the land. What do you know about the Home Missions? I think one has been begun in Manchester, where there are plenty of Sunday-scholars. Children are the quarries which furnish stones for the temple.

April 15th, 1858.

I HAVE been thinking that, if our principles are true, they lead to very wide and important consequences. If both sin and the Gospel are essentially moral things, and therefore concern the faculty of the human conscience; if the conscience of a child is so far developed, that it can, as well as that of a man, discern the difference between moral right and wrong; and if a child's will, through the conscience, can be brought to choose the one and refuse the other; then no limits can be set to the influence of religion in the world. There may be so many religious people upon earth, that this world, bad as it is, may have a Christian public opinion, and a truly Christian public morality. If children *must* be converted, and if they *may* be converted, then Methodism, hitherto, has done nothing for mankind compared with what it may, and probably will yet actually, accomplish. John Wesley appears

to me to have laid the axe to the root of the wickedness of the world; and if his principles be but applied to the minds of children, as they may and ought to be, they will make "the kingdoms of this world" to "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ," in a sense that will greatly surprise even many truly Christian people. Methodists will then begin to talk, not about how many thousands have this year been added to the Society, but how many are yet unconverted, and living in sin. The army of Christ will be prepared to surround the remnant of sinners that are left; and, literally, all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. Observe, the question is not, whether this is all a fancy, but whether or not it is a legitimate consequence from the principles we have adopted.

If it is, should we not begin to talk rather more largely than we have been accustomed to do? If this is not a just inference, where does the fallacy lie? Yet the sheep of Christ have always been a "little flock," and the gate strait that leads to life; "and few there be that find it." What do you think of our principles now? And are you prepared for these bold and daring conclusions? Do not deem it too much trouble to think of these things. Let us first be sure of our principle, and then carry it into practical effect.

June 10th, 1858.

WE talk about children being converted. How does conversion begin in a little child?

Our Rules of Society mention "a desire to flee from the wrath to come," and seem to speak as if conversion began with that. But is there not a previous work on the mind, to which the attention of Sunday-school teachers should be called, in order that children may be prepared for that appeal you make to the conscience, and for that decision for which you call?

"A desire to flee from the wrath to come" shows some knowledge of responsibility, and an apprehension of the wrath of God kindled on account of sin. Should it not be the first aim of all who have to do with children, to impress them with a sense of God's authority, and the impossibility of escaping from its operation?

The absence of this is the cause of all wilful sin. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Both young and old *then* see their sin, and are willing to be pardoned. I have no report to make, but merely to ask whether children, meeting in class, are to be continued on trial, or, at the end of one quarter, to have a ticket, and begin to pay?

September 1st, 1858.

HITHERTO our proceedings have been of a purely experimental character. When I first began to think and speak about children, I saw there was

something to be done, but knew not exactly what. Hence, while we have always kept our eye upon one point, we have, to some extent, gone from one thing to another.

At present our notion, as compared with that of other people, seems to be this: we are all agreed that children are born in sin; and if there is any difference between us, it is as to how they are to be made religious. Some think they are *ignorant*, and must go to school, and be better taught. This is true, but not all the truth. Others say, children are *insensible*, and must be made to feel. This is the philosophy of all revivals, so far as human instrumentality is concerned. It is also another part of the truth. *We* say, the evil to be corrected is a certain perverseness of *will*. Children refuse to submit to God's moral control. In order to bring them to submission, we go straight to work, appeal at once to the conscience, and say, "Is this right, or wrong?" Many have already said, "To obey God is right, and we will act accordingly." To be sure, this assent and promise seemingly are not much. People laugh at them, and say such seed will soon wither away. It may be so; but the seed of religion is all that can be got into children; and a true seed, though but a grain of mustard-seed, may become a tree. If all this is mere mistake, better at once try something else. If it is a reality, we should try to put it on a common-sense footing, and to let people know what we mean.

All people must submit to Christ; and they might as well do it at first as at last. If we can get them to do it, we shall revolutionize the world.

September 16th, 1858.

It is of great importance that we are theologically right in our opinions, while dealing with our young people. Let me have your thoughts on the following points:—Are we right in assuming that the *only* obstruction to the fulfilment of the gracious designs of God lies in the *will* of man? I think Dr. Adam Clarke, in his commentary on the seventh of Romans, says something about the human will as the least depraved of all the faculties of the mind of man. That is an opinion which I am not prepared to adopt.

It appears to me that, whatever the will may be in itself, it is capable of being biassed to the wrong side; so that nothing morally wrong can be done without the concurrence of the will. Since it is a leading faculty of the soul, it is properly made to bear the great weight of blame and guilt in all wrongdoing; so that it is said, "I would, and ye would not:" and we are right in assuming that it is the will alone which opposes the fulfilment of God's purposes in the salvation of mankind. If this is the case, then, whatever may be done for children, they are never morally and religiously right, until their *will* is subdued to the Divine authority. They may

be made intelligent ; but this is sufficient only so far as it leads to the submission of the will, and no farther. This is the case with some, but not with all ; for there are persons who know their Master's will, but do it not. They may feel deeply, as is the case in most revivals ; but this will make them right only so far as it leads to the submission of the will, or leads to a right *purpose*. In such cases many persons do so, but not all ; for some weep, and yet continue to sin. A direct appeal to the conscience is, perhaps, the best way of gaining the will. It obliges the child himself to decide the question of moral right, and prepares the way for his being judged out of his own mouth. Yet, while we do our best, it is useless to pretend that this will *certainly* succeed ; for the will is free, and may elude even this appeal.

October 21st, 1858.

It appears to me that the religious and moral training of children should be one continuous thing, and that it should have respect to the entire duration of their being. The lessons given to them until eight or ten years of age should merely suggest reasons why they should be subject to the authority of Jesus Christ. These should not be so much learned and laboured comments, as if we meant to make all children divines, but simply reasons why and wherefore they ought to "fear God, and keep His commandments."

But we expect little boys and girls to grow up into men and women ; and in order to fit them for adult life, at the age of ten or twelve years they should undergo an examination, or an appeal should be made to their consciences, whether they should bow, or not, to the authority of Christ. If they hesitate, and appear afraid, they should be reasoned with, and encouraged, and be told of the gracious character of Christ, and of the blessedness of those who put their trust in Him. After they have consented to submit to Christ, they should be got into some class, if they are willing. Do you think the Methodists, as far as you know them, would co-operate in such a plan as this ? We could not, perhaps, all at once realize the notion of beginning with infants, and going on until we arrive in heaven. But we might begin with this ; a great improvement would soon follow ; and as to final results, the day would declare them.

November 18th, 1858.

EVER since the arrival of your last, I have thought much of the ten or twelve lads at D——, who have ceased to meet in class. They will not be the last who will act in the same manner ; and it is of great importance to understand all such cases. It is possible that these boys might at first have had a good deal of religious feeling, either of joy or sorrow.

Under this tide they began to meet in class.

When the feeling abated, they thought all was over with them, and so gave all up, and became desperate. You appeal to the conscience of elder children, and ask them to submit to Christ. Many say, "I will." If this purpose be sincere, it is the *essence* of the business. True submission may be made in different degrees. The prodigal, while yet in a far country, may purpose, and say, "I will arise and go to my father;" and this purpose may increase, until he love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. But the submission of the *will* to Christ is what man has to do. All the rest is the work of Christ, and is in truth His part of the covenant. There may be very deep sorrow for sin, followed by abundant peace and joy; but both are the gifts of God, and are not produced by ourselves. They may abound or subside. Our work is to submit to Christ. Religion begins when we say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and continues so long as we can say, "As the eyes of a servant are unto the hands of his master, so are our eyes up unto the Lord."

Religious sorrow and joy are to be sought and prayed for; but so long as the spirit of submission remains, and we can say, "The will of the Lord be done," He will never leave nor forsake us. While urging young people to submit to Christ, and advising other persons to "go and do likewise," be sure to make all parties thoroughly understand this. Submission to Christ is the basis and guard of all morality; and, if young people fix their attention

upon that, it will promote their interests in this world, while it prepares them for another. Should their chief regard settle upon anything else, they will backslide, and waver, and make but little out. Mind always to say much on the temporal advantages of submission to Christ, and take the ground of the secularists from under their feet.

December 2d, 1858.

PROMISES are a good beginning, but that is all. A holy life, and a happy eternity, must begin in something. That something may be very small; a mere grain of mustard seed, "which is the least of all seeds." Nevertheless it is of vast importance in its place. Only let us be content to speak of it just as it is.

The business of religious people, in dealing with children, is simply to appeal to the conscience, and leave that to speak for itself. There is danger of doing too much, as well as too little. The style of "I will," and "you shall," is so often employed in intercourse with children, that we sometimes use it when seeking to promote religion. When used in that case, it involves a vain and idle boast. The greatest and the wisest man cannot, in the matter of true religion, coerce the merest child. God has given free-will even to an infant, and that cannot be forced. By free consent it may become moral and religious. All the commanding in the world is nothing, unless we gain the will.

The best way of gaining that, permanently, and to a good purpose, is to appeal at once to the conscience. Conscience knows very well that God willeth all men to be saved; and that it is wise and right at once to submit ourselves to Him. We may appeal to the feelings, or to the reason; but in all questions of moral right and wrong these are blind, and know nothing. Feeling is moved by anything that is affecting, whether of a moral character or not. People are often sorry for that which is a great religious advantage. Reason tells every man to take care of himself. But conscience tells us it is sometimes right to go into the lions' den; and has made all the true martyrs that have been since the foundation of the world. God began to work in Jewish children when eight days old, and assuredly He did this in order to save them. But little children *must* and *can* consent.

December 9th, 1858.

It is said in the Book of Genesis, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The Spirit of God has a work to do in every fallen human soul: that is, to bring the soul to consent to be saved in the way of God's appointment. Not to consent for the sinner, but to prevail on him to consent for himself:—it being a settled point, that no soul shall be saved without his own consent, however depraved he may be. This consent connects itself both with

time and place. It must be done at some time, and in some place, or it will never be done at all. A human being can consent to be saved by Christ in childhood, better than at any later period of life. Hence the propriety of appeals to the conscience, and of holding meetings for decision, or for saying whether they will consent or not. If young people are not pressed upon the subject, and urged to decide, it is likely they will go on without; and what then? They are born in sin, and begin life with a nature thoroughly depraved. As with the antediluvians, "every imagination" of the heart is "only evil continually." Advance in age is therefore a progress in wickedness. Before the flood, the young people grew up and got married; but they proceeded from bad to worse; and the earth became "corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Nay, more: "Noah was a preacher of righteousness;" but his contemporaries were more and more "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," and opposed and made void all the means used by God to save them.

The holy man preached; but his neighbours ate and drank, bought and sold, "until the day that Noah entered into the ark," and "the flood came, and took them all away." So would it be with this generation, if some time were not fixed, and a day appointed, when they should say whether they would submit to Christ or not. All this *must* be done at some time. It can be done in the days of childhood better than in after years. So go on appealing to conscience, holding meetings for decision, urging

young people to "choose whom they will serve," and exhorting everybody else to "go and do likewise." What is wanted in Methodism is some arrangement which will press and bring all our young people to consent and decide for Christ. You are a religious inspector, and we want a great many more.

December 23d, 1858.

IN one of your recent letters you expressed yourself rather strongly about appealing to the conscience of a person, whether a child or not, and on the highly probable success of that particular address. I should like you to pay special attention to this subject, so that you may be quite sure about its actual working, and there may be "no mistake." I begin to think it is very likely that our dispute with some of our brethren will turn mainly upon this one point. Perhaps religion and morality have never yet been rightly taught in any of our schools, either Sunday or week-day. This is a startling utterance, and perhaps even you may almost inquire, "What next?" I will a little explain myself. Undoubtedly both religion and morality have been taught in our schools, and several children and adults have turned out well-principled and well-conducted people. These things may have been *taught*, and yet not *rightly* taught. That is what appears to me to be rather doubtful. They have not been sufficiently armed with weapons of defence. Everybody approves of religion as an

abstract principle. But, in such a world as this, every true Christian, and even a moral man, must encounter resistance. A child approves of morality in the school; but the day of trial is sure to come, when he leaves the school and goes into the world. When beset by temptation, if he does not feel bound to the right, as by a solemn oath, he will feel his natural liberty, and probably yield to sin.

If he can meet the enemy by saying, "I have sworn, and I will perform it," that I will "keep the commandments of God," he may prove victorious. This armour is obtained by appealing to the conscience, and arises from what St. Peter calls "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

December 28th, 1858.

You ask if the Conference will allow you to remain as you now are. It is probable they will. My principle is, to do what is right, and leave results to God. So far as I am concerned, the end of your appointment to your present position has been fully attained. I wished to ascertain, by an actual experiment, what was the best way of ingrafting Methodism upon the practice of infant baptism. The point is now determined, and I am perfectly willing to leave the great principle for which we have contended upon the sea of life. However tossed on the waves, it is founded in truth, and God is sure to bring it to port before the millennium.

January 13th, 1859.

It appears to me, that, although there are connected with Methodism pious families, Sunday and daily schools, and these are all seeking to impart religion to children; yet it is quite necessary that Methodist Preachers should, either in person or by representatives, do substantially what you have been appointed to do.

Without superseding any one existing agency, all children should be examined, not only about what they know, or have been taught, and can explain. The state of the moral sense should be ascertained; that it may be known how far they love God, or fear Him, and purpose to keep His commandments.

I see you have reported between five hundred and six hundred, who, since the last Conference, have consented, at least, to submit to Christ and become members of the church. Now, in the half million of scholars in our Sunday-schools, and in the families of Methodists, there must be a large number who are equally well disposed. So that, without interfering with anything that is now doing, a right system of religious appeal would lead many to submit to Christ, and become a devout and moral people.

This appears to me to be a matter of paramount importance.

From Psalm lxxviii. 5—8, it seems God intended the bulk and majority of the "generation to come" to be a truly holy people.

But this is the character of only a small proportion of the community in this land. So that there

is still much to be done, before the Divine intentions are fulfilled.

The state of things referred to in Matt. ix. 36 was the result of a mistake in the religious treatment of these people, while children. Many men and women now, though brought up in our Sunday-schools, resemble the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." So that, after all that has been done, it is still needful to say with Paul, Let us go, and visit our brethren to whom we have preached, "and see how they do." Tell me what you think of these things.

January 27th, 1859.

Is the teaching that is likely to impress a child, religiously and morally, exactly the same as ordinary theological instruction, or is it something distinct and peculiar?

To me it appears that a child may be, not merely what is commonly called a good scholar, but a theologian; and yet be destitute of the true principle of all religion and morality. This belongs to the will, and to the conscience; and is distinct from the intellect, whether in a state of neglect or of cultivation, of ignorance or of knowledge. Jeremiah (ch. v. 4, 5) seems to speak to the uneducated, and to scholars, who were better informed; but finds them all alike wicked and worldly.

Religion, or morality, indeed, is not a natural but a gracious endowment, and requires instruction of

some kind. It has no inseparable connexion with ignorance. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea iv. 6.) St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, to "open their eyes," in order that they might obtain "forgiveness," and be "sanctified." (Acts xxvi. 18.) That there is no established connexion between a cultivated intellect and the principle of all morality, is plainly the meaning of St. Paul, when he speaks of a man having "all knowledge" and "not charity." By "all knowledge" he means not merely all secular learning, but a complete understanding of the Bible. Then he assumes that a man may have all this, and yet "have not charity;" which, he says elsewhere, (Rom. xiii. 10,) is the soul of obedience, or "the fulfilling of the law."

Love clearly belongs to the will. It never exists until that has been gained. At first it is called choice. A person can neither love God nor man, until he first choose to do so. Hence it is said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." (Joshua xxiv. 15.) The second command, which assumes the power of choice, is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. xxii. 39.)

Morality therefore requires a teaching, which pertains to and affects the conscience and the will. Is this right? Think seriously of it, because it is a vital point.

February 3d, 1859.

IF Methodism has done right with adults, we cannot be wrong about children. St. Peter says, "Baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." An "answer" supposes a previous question. As the "answer" is to be returned "toward God," so the question was proposed by Him. Indeed He "speaketh once, yea, twice," to man. As the "answer" is that of the "conscience," so the question was addressed to it, and involved an appeal to that faculty. This must therefore have been essentially a *moral* question; for, in fact, the conscience takes cognizance of none other, but of such only.

If a man break open the door of a house, his "*conscience*" takes no notice as to whether it is clumsily or cleverly done; or whether it is by day or by night. It looks only at his motive and end. If he did it only to admit a poor widow woman, with her little children, into her own house, she having mislaid or lost the key, "conscience" approves of it as a kind and humane act. If it was in order to a robbery, "conscience" condemns the act as altogether wrong. So God asks a child, not whether he *knows* a great deal, or very little; but whether or not he intends to submit to Christ, and thereby do that which is "lawful and right." "Conscience" has nothing to do but with the morality of actions; and asks only whether they are right or wrong. "The answer of a *good* conscience" is both right and true; and

means, when asked if he will submit to Christ, "I will." There is no child without a conscience. This faculty is coeval with his existence.

Although this great question may be proposed to a child, it may not be answered until he has become an old man. Yet it may be answered in childhood. It *must* be answered at some time of life, if we are to be saved; and the sooner the better. The old Methodist Preachers did nothing but appeal to the consciences of their hearers. It is a mistake to suppose that what is moral admits of no degrees. John Wesley first saw men as trees walking, and then saw every man clearly. Had his conscience remained fast asleep, he had never seen at all.

Is this right? Think about it well.

February 23d, 1859.

DR. SOUTH, in one of his sermons in the Christian Library, speaks of the *enlightening* office, and of the *obliging* office, of conscience. He says many good things, but not a word about God. Whereas conscience without God is like the eye without light,—not of much use. Every man has a conscience; but as many are living "without God in the world," they sometimes do very bad things. When conscience is brought to God, and acknowledges His authority, then the principle of religion has a beginning.

God is supreme. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

God is supreme in nature. It was He who said to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther."

God is supreme in politics. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men."

God is also supreme in morals. "For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever."

When the conscience sees God, and understands His supremacy, it not only knows the difference between right and wrong, but is afraid to sin, and abstains from even childish immoralities. All this can be done in very early life. Many a child goes up or down a street in one of our large towns, and sees all sorts of fine things, in shop-windows, which it would very much like to have. But it has been efficiently taught at home to keep its little "hands from picking and stealing." A child can understand, and will respect, all the rights of God, just as well as the rights of man. True, children may be taught to be honest, without knowing anything of God or religion. But the child who knows "the God of his father" will not merely abstain from bad actions, but, if rightly instructed, will be led on to "godly sorrow" for sin, to faith in Christ, and to pardon through Him. That which begins in the baptism of an infant a month old, may end in redemption in the blood of Christ, "even the forgiveness of sin." Is it true that the spirit of genuine religion may exist in different degrees; or

that what at first is a mere spark, or the "smoking flax," may be "raised into a flame?" If this be correct, little children may make a good beginning in religion, though they cannot feel and act like men and women.

March 2d, 1859.

THIS week I have thought a good deal about the prevention of sin. My conclusion at present is, that, in the unsearchable depths of Divine wisdom, God frequently brings good out of evil, and after man chooses to be a sinner, makes even his punishment to result in advantage. Adam's transgression was overruled, and his posterity have gained by his fall. Were we to make choice of hell-fire, He could, and probably would, extract benefit to somebody from our perdition. Yet, prospectively, and while man deliberates, the entire conduct of God, and the language of the Gospel, are in accordance with the spirit of the proverb, that "Prevention is better than cure." He intended the warning given in Paradise to keep the first human pair from transgression. God will freely pardon every repenting sinner; but He would rather that Manasseh had imitated the conduct of Joseph, and, when tempted, had started back with horror, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" About this moral prevention there are many misapprehensions; and people do not often perceive the greatness of the mercy of being restrained from sin. Our

Lord said strong things in the way of reproof to the Pharisees ; and persons obliged to lead decent lives are apt to think they will perhaps be like them, and so be proud of their attainments, and out of humour, when any great sinner returns to God, and is well received by Him : like the elder brother, when the prodigal's return was celebrated with a feast. Whereas our Saviour shows that we may be as moral as angels, and yet humble and benevolent as they are. Our children want pressing to return "the answer of a good conscience toward God." As nothing but a "grain of mustard seed" will ever grow into a mustard tree, so this is the only principle that will ever become morality and religion.

April 14th, 1859.

HOWEVER religiously disposed a child may be ; when he goes an apprentice and gets into the world, without suitable companionship, he has not a fair chance. Being in class is not merely needful as a formality, without which he cannot be a Methodist ; but is essential to the continuance of his religious morality. Whether a well-disposed youth can attend his class-meeting regularly or not, still it is necessary that he should have his name in a book,—and know somebody as his Leader, and others as his classmates,—and talk with them, as often as he can, about God and His claims. It is of no use blinking this matter, or pretending to be unsectarian ; for "two are better far than one."

Many Leaders do not know what to say to young persons, after they get them into a class. We must make them understand, as well as we can, that they are to study the character and case of John Wesley. Children are not in the state of mind in which he was found by the Moravians; but rather as he was when a boy at home, and under the teaching of his mother. They need to know a great deal more of such fundamental truths as the moral government of God, the impossibility of getting out of His hands, and the duty and happiness of submitting to Him. Go on. Mind nothing, but giving "line upon line" to all sorts of people, about the religion of children.

September 29th, 1859.

THE following plan of religiously treating children has been adopted in some places:—

1. The great end of the entire arrangement is to bring human beings, in childhood, to acknowledge and submit to the moral government of God; as that is the true beginning of a holy life.

2. The task of doing this is undertaken by the Methodist adult church, consisting of Ministers, lay officers, and private members of Society; acting, however, by proxy as well as in person, and merely engaging, for Christ's sake, to see that the work be done.

3. Accordingly, the church urges the duty especially upon heads of families, and of schools; appoints

examiners, and encourages adult Christians, generally, to make individual appeals to the conscience of youth.

4. All these agents ascertain, by actual inquiry, whether or not, and to what extent, young people do really and practically acknowledge God's moral government.

5. When this point has been ascertained, examiners facilitate their entrance into a class; provided the young people themselves consent to this, and also that there is a convenient class willing to receive them.

6. When children have been so admitted, they remain on trial as long as the Minister and Leader deem it expedient; and are further instructed in the reasonableness of submission to God, and in the various privileges and duties which arise out of this first great act of obedience; it being the foundation of all religion and morality.

Tell me candidly, in your next, what you think of all this. To me it appears that some plan of making our children religious ought to be thrown out before the Connexion. What I have sketched is substantially our present mode of operation. I begin to suspect that the Methodists have missed their way with children in not beginning low enough in religion. We think so much about what the Moravians did for Mr. Wesley when he became a man, that we overlook what his mother did for him while but a child; and so fail to do the same for other children. We have left the work to

schools; but the adult church must do it herself. However, speak your mind.

October 20th, 1859.

ALTHOUGH your answers are brief, yet, as I keep thinking about our children and young people, I continue to repeat my opinions about them. What has transpired in connexion with the revival-movement at Newcastle has a little modified my opinions about the religious treatment of youth. God is the moral Governor of man; and the great duty of human beings is, first of all, to submit to His rule and authority. Adult Christians are not pure from the blood of children, unless they have done all they can to bring them to the great act of a voluntary surrender and submission. Right means must therefore be used, first, to bring young people to say, "I will;" and next, after they have said, "I yield, I yield," to train them from tender-hearted children into religious men and women. As to the first of these, I have already asked some of our friends to turn their Sunday-school addresses into revival prayer-meetings.

I cannot but think that if children were shown the duty of submitting to the authority of God, His right to rule them, the impossibility of escaping out of His hands, and the advantages of a willing submission,—if, at the same time, we attended to St. Paul's instructions about "psalms, and hymns,

and spiritual songs," intermixing the address with such verses as,—

"I will accept His offers now,"

"And can I yet delay?"

and,—

"O happy day that fix'd my choice,"

many who hesitate for a time would at last say, "I will." If people everywhere, and all Sunday-schools, once get into this way, there may be a revival all the year round among children; and young people will yield to Christ at the right time. After they have said, "I will," the right treatment is to prepare them for defensive war. To think only of their growing, and going on,—and forgetting their enemies,—is a mistake. They soon become forward and full of themselves. Whenever they say, "I will," and become truly religious, fighting begins. As soon as the word is sown in their hearts, Satan tries to take it away; persecution arises; and the "cares of this life" begin to spring up. They must be prepared for this contest, by being reminded of the existence of conscience, and other proofs of God's moral government, which are found not merely in the Bible, but in themselves. Original sin shows itself, not by its bluntness, but by all the "deceivableness of unrighteousness." It employs not only the language of Pharaoh, but of Felix. Tell me candidly how far your experience accords with this theory.

November 17th, 1859.

MR. FLETCHER says, the two Gospel axioms are, "free grace," and "free will." This is true theology, and must be carefully acted upon by all who would teach religion to children. This being premised, I say that all young people must be subjected to a religious examination, as they are in the Church of England previously to Confirmation. Nothing can be more reasonable. They have been baptized in infancy; ask them, as soon as ever they are able to decide for themselves, "Do you become parties to your baptism? You have been instructed in religion, partly by your parents, partly by Sunday-school teachers, at daily-schools, and by other people: are you now prepared to become the servants of Christ?"

This examination must follow the work of "free grace." This gift comes upon all men; and very many in the ordinary way are already prepared, when asked, to say, "I yield, I yield." But the promise of the Holy Ghost is "to you, and to your children." That promise is given for the express purpose of being pleaded; and had we more prayer-meetings, in the stead of long, tedious addresses, our Sunday-schools would be more distinguished by revivals; far more of the scholars, when religiously examined, would say, "I will accept His offers now." Advise the friends everywhere to have more prayer in their Sunday-schools; for the coming of the Holy Ghost is what is greatly needed. Examiners will be encouraged to go on, when their questions are

honoured with, "We will." When they hear only "No, no, no," they soon grow weary of the work.

I see in the "Watchman," this week, that the Church-folks in London are calling for revival-prayer-meetings on behalf of their Sunday-schools. This, be assured, is what the Christianity of this country most needs,—religion among children.

December 2d, 1859.

IF our enterprise is ever to be of any use to the world, we must take care that all our principles be in accordance with the designs of God, and with the nature of man. It is only the plans which are based on His own truth that He can be expected to bless and prosper. Our mode of dealing with children is agreeable to human nature. I am not quite so clear that we pay sufficient attention to God, and are, as we ought to be, careful to give to Him the glory due unto His name. The revivals in America and in Ireland began chiefly with the Calvinists; and they rest mainly upon what is good in their system of theology. Like it, they are partial and limited in their extent. The revival in Ireland displays the sovereignty of God; for when thoughtless people are "*struck*," it is manifest that He "doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him." Christianity itself came from Him who is "Lord of all;" and had He not done all things "according to the counsel of His own will," the world had never been redeemed.

The American revival shows the great power of intercessory prayer, and to what a depth God will stoop in answer to the requests of men. That movement seems to have been occasioned by united, earnest, and persevering prayer. All this relates to sovereign grace. Calvinism puts honour upon God ; and He does for His creatures "exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think." But Calvinism is not in accordance with the nature of man. Mr. Wesley did right in opposing some of its principles. As he said, "We have leaned too much towards Calvinism ;" it is quite possible to "lean too much" towards Arminianism. Mr. Wesley's mother did so when she told her son about his duty, but said nothing of his privileges. She made him a trembling slave, and not a happy child. The Moravians came, and told him of the grace of God, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Yet she held the truth, though not all the truth. So may we. If Wesley was right, we are right. Children are the men and women of to-morrow. If the harvest is to be good, we must mind the seed. Yet we may keep to the right until we wander into the wrong. While, therefore, we lead people to think of children, let us say a word about their Maker and Redeemer. We must encourage prayer, and dwell much on the need of the Spirit's influence ; for unless the Holy Ghost is with us, we shall make nothing out. While I say we must try to keep in sight the God of all grace, I do not mean that we should depart from our old ground.

Whether we can explain everything or not, every man knows that his will is free, and that the time of childhood and youth is the best to seek salvation. Think of free will ; but do not forget free grace.

December 8th, 1859.

PEOPLE sometimes ask, "What do you Jacksons want? What would you have the Methodists to do?" Dr. Bunting used to say to me, "Tell us *how* to do the thing, and we are prepared to do it."

We want all our elder children, whether in our schools or not, to be individually and seriously asked, "Do you mean to submit to Christ?" To this, however, there are many objections. Who is to ask them? Answer: Some representative of the church—one of the Preachers. But, it is said, "The Preachers have no time." Then some person appointed by the church, and in whom she has entire confidence, should undertake the task ; so that when the young people say, "Yes," they may be taken at once to a Leader, received into his class, and trained for heaven. Perhaps many may say, "Yes," who can pay nothing, and be only a trouble to everybody. That I cannot help. The remedy belongs to other parties. This is what human souls require.

Many of the children were baptized by our own Ministers, and they are specially bound to inquire what has become of them. It is a great benefit to be admitted into any of our schools, either

Sunday or week-day. It is the duty of the church which provided this accommodation to inquire how far the children mean to profit by this advantage. The church is to receive them when they leave the school, and to take them with her to heaven ; and is therefore expected to ask them whether they are willing to go there. If any of them refuse, and will not be the servants of Christ, we can but leave them to go into the world as they now do. But they ought all, at least, to be asked. We send Missionaries to heathens abroad, and Preachers to sinners at home ; and should at least say to our own children, who apply to us for religious instruction, " Will ye also be His disciples ? " When the church examiner is sure to come, the teachers in our Sunday-schools will try to prepare the children to meet him. Is this right ? If it be, put it into the heads of the friends wherever you go. Until all our young people are asked what they mean to do, Methodism is grossly defective.

December 20th, 1859.

A DETAIL of your personal proceedings is very good ; but I want our principles to be discussed, the foundations properly laid, and something that will do for the entire Connexion. Time is getting on, and we shall soon have done with all things here below. At present my notion is, that we must have the Preachers engaged in this business, or we shall

make but little out. Either in person, or by proxy, they should ask every elder child in our Sunday-schools, "Are you willing to submit to Christ, and to meet in class?" and then act according to the answer returned. It should be fully known, in every school, that such an inquiry will take place. This would be no discredit to any man, as it would only be imitating a Bishop in the Church of England.

Yet we ought not *merely* to imitate the Established Church; for it was mainly owing to her blunders here, that there was a call for Methodism in the country. Therefore, the answer to the question should not be written down; but every child should reply as he feels. Nor should the examination take place only once in a lifetime; but be often repeated. Neither should we be entirely guided by the answer returned; but use our reason in considering whether or not the young people are likely to act as they have said. Such as said "Yes" should be recommended to a suitable class; so that their avowal might lead to a moral and religious life.

Whether this be the right way or not, what is the best way of giving publicity to the right thing, so as ultimately to render it Connexional? Shall somebody be got to agitate the question at the next Conference, and try it again there? Or shall we begin locally, and try to get the people to form associations in Circuits, and let the matter work its own way?

Infant baptism is but the beginning of a great work, which is to be followed by instruction; and

completed by personal consent. I should not like to say, as you do in one of your letters, that if children do not yield to the Holy Spirit when they are young, it is not likely that they ever will. That is refuted by the entire history of Methodism. All that the early Methodists did was to persuade sinners to add personal consent to infant baptism. Some of them, at the time they did this, were thirty, forty, or fifty years of age, and even older than that. At the same time, God plainly gives us to understand, that as soon as ever a child becomes capable of personal consent, there is not a moment to be lost. Where that delay is matter of unavoidable necessity, God will be found to be merciful; when it is matter of choice, it is an act of presumption, and He will prove Himself to be just. Get all the opinions you can on these points.

January 30th, 1860.

THE whole question is stated in the Prayer-Book, in the office appointed for the "baptism of such as are of riper years." All are "born in sin," and therefore "must be born again." All are redeemed by Christ, and therefore may be saved. I do not believe in the cry of churches for adults, and only schools and education for children. It is essential Socinianism. Old and young want just the same thing. The malady of human nature is moral, rather than intellectual; and the universal cure

depends mainly, under God, upon the human will. There are two ways of bringing sinners to Christ, both of which are clearly sanctioned by Christianity. For the sake of distinction, we may call one of these the Methodist way ; and the other, the way of the Church of England. The first relates chiefly to adults, is partly retrospective, and has been pursued by Methodism from the beginning. The other is altogether prospective, relates mainly to children, and is that we are seeking to forward. Now, to say nothing of anything else, the first is sustained by a vast organization. There is old Methodism ; and there are the Foreign and Home Missionary Societies. If it be right to train up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and if that plan is countenanced by the Gospel, it ought surely to have some means to support it, and not to be forsaken and alone.

Then there ought to be scores and hundreds of examiners, just to do what you are doing. We have given good instructions, but have had few examinations ; and the health of the daughter of my people has been healed—slightly. I have more to say ; but this is enough.

Good Friday, 1860.

THE evangelization of the world is a noble subject. But I keep thinking about children, who are a part of the redeemed human family ; and attention to

them will assuredly hasten the subjection of the whole to its adorable Redeemer.

Mr. Wesley has given an account of a child who was truly converted, and died well, at only two and a half years of age. Some hearts are like the melting wax before the fire, and yield as soon as ever the parties are spoken to on the subject of religion. Others have more of Pharaoh's stiffness, and hold out much longer. Those who do not yield at first should be applied to again; and the process should be continued, not only through the time of childhood, but after they become young people, and even to old age, if necessary; and the application should never end until they say,—

“Nay, but I yield, I yield;
I can hold out no more.”

I consider you as one whose business it is to go to children of all ages, after Sunday-school teachers have done with them, and say, “Will you?” I hope you will find among the many who have not submitted to Christ not a few who will be persuaded to yield to Him. Had we more such agents, we should have more converts; and I should like to hear that we had many such in every place. This seems not very likely to take place in my lifetime; but perhaps it may after my death.

April 20th, 1860.

As to our great business, the entire work of teaching religion is included in two texts: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." (Eccles. xi. 6.) "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord." (Matt. xiii. 51.) At the beginning of Methodism, many even of the better clergy were discouraged. Godfathers and godmothers having violated their promises, and Bishops satisfying themselves with a shadow instead of a substance, they thought, the "morning" of life being wasted in this way, it was of no use attempting to improve its "evening." A Methodist Preacher cried,—

"Outcasts of men, to you I call,
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves !
He spreads His arms to' embrace you all ;
Sinners alone His grace receives."

Multitudes of these adult sinners were converted and saved. Now we are surrounded with children. There is no wisdom in sinning when we are young, that we may repent when we are old. Therefore, "in the morning sow thy seed."

Our Lord knew it was of no use to speak to His disciples, even by parables, while they did not apprehend His meaning; and so, after a long discourse, He deemed it needful to pause, and say to them, "Have ye understood all these things?" It can be easily ascertained which children have benefited by religious instruction, when they are

asked this question, "Will ye also be His disciples?"

There are Government Inspectors about scholarship; and the church ought to have them about religion.

April 27th, 1860.

My notion is, that the Superintendent of a Circuit may appoint one or more of his colleagues to act the part of an inspector, with respect to children, and may, if necessary, appoint laymen to assist, to any extent; and thus we may examine every child, by saying to him, "Will you?" The great matter is, to see that all this be actually done. This arrangement will act not merely as a test, but prove a lasting benefit to the great mass of our young people, who will seek admission into the adult church.

Regenerate children will do better for this world than older converts, inasmuch as they will cultivate a purer and more lofty morality. John Wesley was always far ahead of his people in morality; witness his rules about smuggling, and what he says about buying and selling to one another. We hear of American revivals, and American slavery. Their revivals are not hollow, but they are chiefly among adult converts; and these, finding slavery to be profitable, and having a lower standard of morality, persuade themselves it is no sin. Had they been "born again" in childhood, when their

hearts were tender, and their moral principles not corrupted by sinful habits, slavery would ere this have died and vanished away.

The difficulty is to get the thing set agoing. I know no better way than that of talking about it, hearing all that can be said against it, and duly weighing all objections. This therefore is what I wish you to do in every place. Get people to talk about it everywhere. Mention different parts of the plan ; ask what are their difficulties and objections ; and let me know what they say.

Everybody seems anxious for persons to be morally good ; but they do not seem to see that they must first "be born again," and that this may be attained by little children. We cannot deny original depravity ; but although children are all "born in sin," yet, as soon as they enter the world, they come under the operation of the covenant of grace, and may soon become new creatures in Christ.

May 14th, 1860.

It has been said of a wicked king of Judah, "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God." This was to him a new view of the moral character of God, and appears to have struck him as a new discovery. Previously he was not aware that the Maker of the world would not suffer His creatures to violate His commands ; and if they did not learn obedience by instruction, they must be

taught it by punishment. He had been running a course of open sin, acting in "ignorance and unbelief;" but when "bound in fetters, and carried to Babylon," then he ascertained that moral laws were administered by an almighty Judge, and that the Holy One of Israel was the Governor of the world. True, he might have known this sooner; but it was "better late than never." Jews were commanded to teach these things to children: Obadiah knew them all when he "feared the Lord from his youth." But Manasseh was either never told them, or he had misimproved his opportunities. Many children among ourselves, after attending a Sunday-school for years, have left it, to pursue a course of worldliness and sin. They were not aware that the world had a moral Governor, though one of the most obvious of all truths, until they made the discovery by sad experience,—perhaps in the next world,—perhaps in hell.

Should the brethren say anything to you at the District-Meeting, you can tell them that you are helping young people to understand that there is a God that judgeth in the earth; that they are sure to find this out, either now or hereafter; that on many accounts it is best to make the discovery now; that the best way of ascertaining whether they have made it, is to ask them, point-blank, "Will ye also be His disciples?" If they reply, that parents, not Ministers, must make this known to children, as Mr. Wesley's mother did to her son; you may say, "That is true, but somebody

must do it ;” for it is of little use preaching to them until they know that “the Lord He is God ;” and it is undeniable that the duty is neglected to a sad extent.

June 21st, 1860.

THAT it is the wills rather than the understandings of our children that need attention, is a great truth which you do well to keep in mind. But a word must be said for the principle of co-operation. God has committed the rising generation to His entire church. When parents and teachers have done all they can, there is still needed the labour of Preachers and others. Consent may be delayed. But there are questioners of different ranks, and some may ask more efficiently than others. When parents or teachers have repeatedly said, “Will you ?” and without success, it may still be necessary for Preachers, either in person or by proxy, to repeat the same question. As continual dropping wears a stone, so a succession of questions will often end in the conquest of even an obstinate spirit.

Co-operation can do still more ; for while teachers in a Sunday-school, day after day, make this appeal, a Preacher can ascend the pulpit, and prove as plainly as that two and two make four that it is right, and wise, and pleasant in early life to yield ourselves unto God ; and the most absurd thing in the world to act on a contrary principle.

If a moral impression is to be made on the world, we must be "all at it, and always at it."

July 16th, 1860.

THE aspect of our question, which at present most rests upon my mind, is the moral state of the world, and the great design of the Gospel. Both appear to me to require the friends of Jesus to aim at the regeneration of children. Human consent is indispensably necessary to salvation, and must be given at some time. It may be given in childhood, as well as at any later period of life. Possibly it may be refused; but, at any rate, it ought to be asked for. Not being sought, it is not given; and young people go on thoughtlessly from day to day, until death comes to startle them, and then it is often too late. Submission to the moral authority of God is conducive to our own well-being on earth. "Godliness is profitable to all things." What multitudes of people are miserable, just because they are not moral! and they are not moral, just because they have never submitted to the authority of God. This is a redeemed as well as a fallen world; and its fearful disorders are very much owing to the neglect of children, or not rightly seeking their voluntary submission to the moral government of God.

I am greatly obliged by the firmness of your attachment to the cause of children, and pray God to direct and bless you.

September 21st, 1860.

"SUFFER the little children to come unto me;" "for of such is the kingdom of God." A human being is never so near to Christ and salvation, as in the time of childhood. The longer we live, it becomes, not more easy, but more difficult, to come to Christ, and enter upon a holy life. An obdurate process appears to be going on while the heart is unrenowned; so that an Apostle said, "Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." When the power of bad habit is combined with the energy of depravity, it becomes very formidable. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good," who have been "accustomed to do evil."

October 12th, 1860.

It seems to me that the moral government of God is universal and eternal. I cannot conceive of God, without supposing that "His throne is in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all."

Hence He is the "Lord of all;" His law extends to every man, woman, and child; He is the "Judge of all the earth;" and "we must all give an account of ourselves unto Him." Having, however, endowed man with freedom, He has left him for a time in the "hand of his own counsel," and will not dispose of His creature, until He has first seen how that creature will dispose of himself. We have been far

too much frightened by the accounts we have heard, and the opinions we have held, about man's fallen state. It is perfectly true, that we are "born in sin;" that we have an inherent bias to what is morally wrong; and that, in ourselves, "there dwelleth no good thing." This fact must for ever keep us in the dust. It is impossible to account for what is past, upon any other principle. But, however true it may be that this is a fallen, it is equally true, that this is a redeemed, world. Baptism is a proof of this; for as Christ "died for all," as God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," so it is "not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Those who die in infancy are received into heaven; and the Bible says of children generally, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." God therefore directs them all to have a Christian name, in order that they may have a holy nature; to be made members of His church upon earth; to be instructed and persuaded to be reconciled to Him; so that they may choose life, and live with Him in heaven for ever. "Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

Those who rightly use their freedom, who say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" may fully expect to have the "love of God shed abroad" in the heart "by the Holy Ghost," and to enjoy the blessing of entire sanctification, or to love the Lord with all their heart. People will *always* be "born

in sin;" but we are not to calculate upon their being, while the world stands, such baptized heathens as they were in this country when Mr. Wesley was born. Assuredly there is a direct road from infant baptism to downright Methodism. The first is simply an ordinance of God; the last involves the consent of man. A child, as well as an adult, will say, when the subject is fairly put before him, "I will accept His offers now." Catechisms are good; but *consent* is everything.

November 2d, 1860.

I FULLY agree with you, that in all which belongs to the salvation of children "God is beforehand with us;" and therefore our great business is with them, rather than with Him. As to our proceedings being connected with "Catechumen Classes," you appear not to have correctly caught my meaning. I just intended that I do not see how we can reasonably expect to make children truly religious without some sort of a class-meeting, which they can enter. If ever they abstain from sin, and are zealous of good works, it will be by a believing sight of God, or a vivid apprehension of Him, His character, and relation to themselves. In other words, religion is the foundation of morality. Baptism is "an outward and visible sign." God is a Spirit, and altogether invisible to sense. We must therefore either think of Him, or

talk about Him, in order to preserve any sight and feeling of Him in our minds. Suppose, then, a child goes to school, and hears and thinks about God, until he beholds His glory, and feels his responsibility to Him. He may be deeply affected; for the impression produced by a first view is often very great. But then it is of the nature of feeling to subside again; and in time it is sure to vanish away, either in whole or in part. Moreover, to cherish fear, or love, or any sense of an invisible being, by merely thinking of him, is unnatural; and only some sorts of people can do it at all. The most common way of preserving an interest in a being we cannot see, is to talk about him. Concerning our absent relatives, we like to talk with anybody who knows the family, and will talk to us about them. If we have nobody to talk with us about the Triune God to whom we belong, we shall very soon either forget Him altogether, or be religious by fits and starts; hot at one time, and cold at another. If we are to be "in the fear of the Lord all the day long," and from one year to another, we must get into some class-meeting, and have friends to talk with us about our God and His Christ. Is this a sound principle, or is it not? We are already mainly and substantially right; but there are many details yet to be considered.

November 9th, 1860.

YOUR last was very satisfactory ; yet I shall continue to discuss our principles with you, being wishful for us to know exactly what it is right for us to do. However a child may at one time be impressed with the supreme authority of God, and however resolved to submit to it ; yet the reasons for all this are always the same, and will be, as long as the world stands. It is perhaps scarcely reasonable to expect that he will continue in the same mind, through all the vicissitudes of life, without some friends with whom he may talk of God, to whom he is amenable, but whom he cannot see. Therefore we are agreed that every child who says, " I will," shall be advised to meet in class.

Between our plan and that of Home Missions, as commonly understood, there is this difference. The average duration of human life has been said to be thirty years. Suppose we divide this period into thrice ten, it is obvious that if regeneration take place within the first ten years, there will, as compared with the second or last ten years, be a lessening of the difficulty or uncertainty attending that work, of one or two thirds ; and a lengthening for the same period of the time for " love and good works."

Christianity is both a dispensation and a covenant. It is a dispensation, inasmuch as it came altogether from God. It is a covenant, or " mutual contract ;" for there are " two parties, each of which is bound to fulfil certain engagements to the

other;" namely, fallen men and God. The Gospel contains commands, addressed to man; and "exceeding great and precious promises," to be fulfilled by God. The sign of this covenant is affixed to Christian infants; for they are bound to perform its duties, and are authorized to look for the bestowment of its blessings. Doing anything we may please, is not performing our engagement, but doing just that which the covenant itself prescribes and requires. God promises things which are suited to His character, and which we are unable to bestow upon ourselves; such as the forgiveness of sin, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. John Wesley consented to his part of the covenant, and submitted to the Divine authority, when he was a child at home; but he never understood what great things God was willing to do for him, until he met with the Moravians.

In all revivals, God's part in this gracious covenant is the most prominent and conspicuous; but unless man consents to perform his part, it subsides, and comes to an end. It has been said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and future punishment is often threatened to men, in case of the non-performance of their own part in this covenant. But is that threatening ever held out, in case of the non-fulfilment of God's promises? Our heavenly Father will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him;" but is it ever said, "Except the love of God be shed abroad in the heart, we shall be sent to hell?" Do you remember any

passage in which this is affirmed or implied? Think, and say in your next.

December 7th, 1860.

ON two points, at least, our community is manifestly defective; namely, the point of self-decision, and the non-use of the means of moral preservation and growth in young people. According to our existing "rules," every person, in the first instance, decides for himself, whether he will join the Society or not. When he applies, the Minister will give him a ticket. This is well enough for adults; but young people, left altogether to themselves, are as likely to arrive at a wrong as at a right decision. Children must therefore be asked, "Will you?" And, beside this, they must also be placed in a position favourable to perseverance. In the "Large Minutes" it is said Methodists had preached in many places without forming a Society; but the scheme did not succeed. Nor would Methodism have been what it now is, if it had not been for class-meetings. By thinking and talking about Christ, the inward fire has been stirred up, and has continued to burn and to spread. But arrangements are not made whereby even willing children can "see Him who is invisible." Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." The

wind itself cannot be seen, although its effects are palpable and obvious. Christian practice is just as clear; though its cause is equally invisible. Any person can say to a child, "You must not tell a lie;" and conscience approves of this advice. If anybody demand the reason *why*, we are obliged to have recourse to God and religion. Morality is always the same; but unless young people think and talk about God through all the changing scenes of life, they will probably, sooner or later, cease to be moral, or "fall away." Without meeting in class, they are not likely to persevere.

January 18th, 1861.

I AM pleased to hear that you met with a revivalist at —, and paid such attention to his proceedings. The doings of revivalists are not to be despised, or regarded with indifference; but rather to be anxiously considered, by every thoughtful man. Their forms of action involve the only principle of spreading true religion in the world which Methodism has yet openly sanctioned, on which both our Home and Foreign Missions hinge, which has been acted on from the beginning, and which led Mr. Wesley to sing,—

"See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of grace."

Whatever people may say, that is no unimportant thing which has produced such effects as these.

However noisy revivalists and their converts may be; although their proceedings may involve many mistakes, to which bystanders may make objections; yet there is one great broad fact, conspicuous in all their plans. By their instrumentality people may be greatly affected; but, in the end, they all get into Society, and begin to meet in class. But for this arrangement, their religion would probably be but short-lived, and vanish like the "morning cloud." In Society, and while meeting in class, they not merely "continue in well doing," but "grow stronger and stronger."

Now to come to the application of all this to children. You get among mere boys and girls, and say, "Will ye also be His disciples?" and it is scarcely matter of wonder that many of them reply, "I will." It is objected that perhaps many of these promises may come to nothing. Now, why not ask these poor children, at the same time, if they are willing to meet in class? There can be no morality without a reference to God; and although class-meeting is not religion, it is a means in order to its attainment. "But would you encourage a parcel of rude and naughty children to meet in class?" Not unless they were willing. But if they said "I will," who will add, "You shall not?" "But we have been accustomed to invite them to meet in class only *after* they have consented to be the true disciples of Christ." What are the facts of their case? Bad or good, they are under the moral government of God. If they are saved, it

is entirely through His grace. He is "the Judge of all the earth," and will deal with every one of His creatures according to his works. The sooner they understand all this the better. I have much more to say, but must leave it. Converts do, but our children do not, meet in class; although the recognition of God's authority over them is of the utmost moment.

February 8th, 1861.

MR. WESLEY says, "There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, and of love, and these not delusive, but really from God, long before we have the witness in ourselves." "Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance, (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God,) before we are accepted in the Beloved." "But it is by no means advisable to rest here." It appears therefore safest to observe some degree of modesty and reserve, when speaking of young people who have barely resolved to be Christians. By all means, go on as we have done; but when an affirmative answer has been given to your question, speak of all this as "Methodism in children." That promisers should meet in class, is, I think, vital. There can be no morality without religion. Morals are dictated by conscience. God only is the Lord of conscience. It is controlled by none but Him. Methodism, by

its class-meetings, has brought souls into immediate contact with God. Hence its great success.

February 14th, 1861.

HITHERTO Methodism has been a blessing to this nation, and covered herself with honour, by converting sinners, and promoting religion and morality. So far she has contemplated chiefly adults, and if she now turn her attention to children, she must "walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing," while she minds another class of persons. It will not do for her now to substitute learning for religion, refinement for morality, and intellectual attainments for experimental Christianity. This is what some of our would-be philanthropists are attempting to do; but Methodism must abide by her own principles, or the glory will depart.

April 11th, 1861.

I WANT to have your opinion on a point of Wesleyan theology. We have clearly in John Wesley two stages of religious experience; the first while he was at Oxford and in America; and the second, after he was acquainted with the Moravians. He was first awakened to a sense of the Divine authority, and of his responsibility to God, by the teaching of his mother. So impressed was he with

the sight of the account he would have to give, that he avoided everything that he thought to be immoral. At length he learnt from the Germans that this same God would give him to know that his sins were forgiven, and make him unspeakably happy. For this he prayed, and trusted; and it was done to him according to his faith. Now this is the question which arises out of his narrative:— Was he, during the former time, in a state of guilt and danger? or was the first state an introduction to the last, and substantially of the same nature? For awhile he regarded his first state as delusive; but afterwards he appeared to be of another opinion. Which of these views was right? The question is not one of idle curiosity, but closely connected with the salvation of children.

April 26th, 1861.

IN this week's "Watchman" I have seen an account of the meeting held in the Centenary Hall, about erecting additional chapels in London. Of course, having read it in my present state of mind, it has persuaded me that Methodism ought to have a Preacher appointed, immediately, by the Conference, to visit the Sunday-schools, and advise respecting the children who are about leaving them: not to have the power of actually admitting them into Society in any Circuit, but merely of recommending them for admission to the proper authorities. That he have

a suitable printed designation ; he may be called " a Missionary to Sunday-scholars," or anything of that kind. Observe, I say *a Preacher*.

Population will go on ; and Methodism must go on too, either gradually, or by fits and starts. The great movement in London is the result of former neglect. Shall we stay till a meeting is held, and a hundred thousand pounds are raised ; or look for some great revival ; or get to work with the children at once ? Population increases by imperceptible degrees ; vegetation grows gradually ; and religion might as well proceed steadily. Nothing is gained by sudden and violent efforts. There can be no regular increase, while children are neglected. A Minister has been set apart for profligate adults ; two for 70,000 day-scholars ; surely then between 400,000 and 500,000 Sunday-scholars deserve the services of a Preacher.

May 24th, 1861.

As the result of several experiments, we have arrived at the conclusion, that all children, after being instructed, should be examined, or asked directly, " Will you ?" It is not yet settled between us how that inquiry should be conducted. This has led me to think on the appointed practice of the Church of England, from which Methodism was derived.

According to the Prayer-Book, an examination

is to precede Confirmation. (See the order beginning with, "Then shall the Bishop say.")

This form assumes that such an examination is to be often repeated. Before children are presented to the Bishop, they are to be instructed by their parents, by their sponsors, and by their Ministers; and all these are to ask them whatever questions they deem expedient. What is done at Confirmation is a sort of inquiry-in-chief, or a final and official examination; immediately after which they are admitted to the Lord's Supper, or to church communion. Examinations in prospect have a powerful and salutary influence. Many a scholar greatly dislikes the labour of learning, but conquers his indolence, and becomes perseveringly diligent, by thinking of the coming examinations. But this particular inquiry is neutralized by a *prescribed answer*. Of what use could any examination be, if the answers to the several questions proposed were all written down, so that the party interrogated had nothing to do but commit them to memory?

Beside, "God will bring every work into judgment." It is said, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day." We may delay, and become unconcerned; but if we do, we are sure to be asked by the "Judge of all the earth," *why* we delayed until "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." It is therefore our wisdom not to trifle with the directions of Scripture, but "prepare to meet

our God." Children therefore *must* be examined, in some way. What do you think of a sort of official examination, being preceded by many others, but conducted by the Circuit Ministers, who shall judge of, and decide upon, the cases which may come before them ?

June 16th, 1861.

IN order to make our plan sufficiently known, we have only to say, that we wish the children, at a proper age, to be examined by the Circuit Ministers ; and, if found willing to obey Christ, and to meet in class, then to be admitted into the Society. It seems to me, that, if we can gain this point, it includes all we need. Children must join the Society, if they are to be religious, not only while they are young and little, but also, through a long life, to escape the corruptions which are in the world, and to be kept by the power of God unto salvation. Yet Preachers are, like the Bishop in the Church of England, to conduct a sort of final examination, for which the parties are to be prepared. by other people. Human beings, young and old, from the moment of their coming into the world, to their going out of it again, are under the moral government of God. Christian parents, with Sunday and day school teachers, like godfathers and godmothers, will tell children what are the facts of their case, state hopeful cases to the Ministers, and thus open their

way into the adult church. The Establishment and Methodism are perfectly agreed about the necessity and the nature of regeneration; and these are the chief things. No child can be truly moral or religious, "except he be regenerate and born anew." But the Church does not consider the child to be merely passive in the new birth; for it is with her a *question*, as well as a *prayer*, and she asks him what he means to do. I am glad you are going to P——; and hope you will endeavour to make T— and W— understand that people may as well be converted while they are children, as when they are men and women. May God go with you, and grant you great success!

July 5th, 1861.

THE person who wrote in the "Watchman" about a fortnight ago, wondering that, as there were so many on trial last year, there should be so small an increase in the Societies this year, is this week reminded by another correspondent of the "wear and tear" of Methodism. He might have thought of our manner of admitting members. So long as people enter our Societies, and leave them again, just as they please, our statistics will be liable to great fluctuations. This subject bears directly upon our great business. We want another mode of admission with respect to the children of our people.

Read carefully the "Rules of the Society" pre-

fixed to all the Class-Books ; and you will find that the members, as they thought proper, applied for admission into the Societies, *desiring* to meet in class, and also *desiring* to flee from the wrath to come. This was necessary at the first, because Methodism had no previous hold upon the people. But we have held on in precisely the same course, notwithstanding the change which has taken place in the position of Methodism. Yet, after Mr. Wesley's death, the Conference made a great change in this respect. Methodism, during his lifetime, was regarded as a mere appendage to the Established Church, but the Clergy would not have it : so the Conference, when Mr. Wesley was no more, raised the system of Methodism into independence ; and all the Preachers were authorized to baptize children. Yet, when they were baptized, the children of the Methodists were not treated as members of the church. This I cannot but regard as an inconsistency. For the Societies then became a church ; and children by their baptism received a formal recognition of membership. The children of Methodists were then exactly in the situation of the children of Church-people. They must, when capable of a rational choice, consent to be members of the church, and thus ratify their baptism. But their consent must be *fairly* obtained : not by asking them a question, and making an answer for them, and putting it into their mouths ; leaving them to commit it to memory, and answer by rote, and then calling that consent. In many

cases this is simply a lie, and can do no good. We must say to them, "WILL YOU?" All baptized children belong specially to Christ, and are to be claimed for Him. Is this right and sound?

July 12th, 1861.

It is high time that Methodists, though a little while since a small and insignificant sect, should begin to contemplate the entire population of the country. But it is said, "The bulk of the people belong to the Established Church, and not to Methodism." The people are to be made moral and religious. God has said so. In this free country they are open to any body of persons who can and will do the necessary work. It has long been a shame that this country should be in its present moral condition after what God has done in raising up the Methodists. A fearful state of things has been brought to light by the "midnight-meetings." Every prostitute has some male companion. If the devil did not get children to go down into this frightful pit of sensuality, adults would hardly be found there at all. Nothing but the fear of God in the hearts of persons of very tender years will put a stop to this crying evil.

If we look into the land at large, vice and its miseries beset us on every hand. Yet the early Methodists laboured hard to prove that "Jesus died

for all ;” but, if children are not to be regenerated, the masses might as well have slumbered on.

We seldom *ask* our young people to avow their intentions, and say to all the world that they mean to be the disciples of Christ ; and the state of the country testifies of the result of our caution and prudence. If any person says, “ They will be converted by and by,”—we leave them and the Home Missionary to settle the matter.

[The following letter closes the long correspondence in which the full heart of the writer had so freely poured itself out ; and was the last production of the pen consecrated for so many years to the service of Methodism and her young people. It was written about a fortnight before his death. We insert it entire.]

July 19th, 1861.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

ALTHOUGH I do not *see* the propriety of writing to you this week, since you are coming here * the next ; yet it is perhaps better to follow your direction. I have been recently thinking on the history of religion in our own country. In the early part of the last century, the Church of England, having long taught the young people to answer like parrots, the whole land was in a fearful state with respect to morals and religion. The Dissenters had tried politics and

* To attend the Newcastle Conference.

liberty, and the Clergy preached morality, but both were worn out ; and, as the people were all born in sin, profaneness went on increasing. John Wesley and his Preachers tried simple Christianity, and made its appeal universal, saying to all, the moral as well as the immoral, " Ye must be born again." The result was great and surprising. Other denominations did the same in various ways, and an impression was made on the adult wickedness of the nation, which continues to this day. Methodism was a new discovery, a recommendation of something which had not been thought of before. Yet but a proportion of the entire population were actually saved. But our Home-Mission plan has nothing new in principle. It is merely doing again what has been done, in various ways, in years past ; and the results are sure to be the same.

But people say, "We have Sunday and daily schools." Let us look at them. Here, again, there is nothing new. Persons have long thought there was a connexion between general science and religion. Our Universities are founded on this principle. But the country has never been moral. Nor is it at this day. There has been, indeed, an extraordinary revival of religion. But population has increased, and so has prostitution. Jesus said,—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is not a knowledge of things generally, but only of what God has revealed, that will make people moral.

God has insisted on the necessity of personal

consent; without it, according to the Bible, there can be no religion. That consent must be given, not by proxy, but in person. Each must say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do?" Some say, "Will you?" and others bring sinners to this point without formally asking the question. In some way or other, by hook or by crook, human beings must be regenerated while they are children; or, though Christ has died for all, this can never be a holy world.

According to the Report of our Education Committee, they have had, in the past year, an increase of day and Sunday schools. The Report says, "In the Sunday-schools there are, members of Society, 20,279, and others, members of select classes, 20,467. It has not been in the power of the Committee to present such a statement of progress in any former year." Have *you* had anything to do with this increase? Think the matter over, and come prepared with an answer.

Yours affectionately,

SAMUEL JACKSON.

END OF THE LETTERS.

WOMAN'S MISSION.

HAVE you ever reflected upon the blessings you can bestow on your country and on the world, by bringing the rising generation to remember their Creator in the days of their youth? In this department of duty and usefulness the agency of woman is of the utmost importance. Her influence in the great and adult world may be liable to many interruptions and limitations; but among the rising generation it is almost unbounded. During their earlier years, children are almost exclusively in the hands of women, and *they* have the means of influencing youthful minds to an inconceivable extent. This influence, rightly directed, will bestow the most important benefits upon mankind. The mother and grandmother of Timothy were the chief instruments in forming his character; and by training such an able and successful evangelist, they conferred an abundant blessing upon the church and the world.

There is many a mother, surrounded by an infant family, whose daily wants occupy her entire care and attention. There is many a grandmother, aged and decrepit, leaning on her staff, and unable to leave her home. Many a sister, young, modest, and retiring, who cannot bear the broad laugh and the coarse jest of rude and wicked men. Yet all these desire the happiness of their country, and the conversion of the world; although they think they can do nothing to promote either the one or

the other. Let me tell all such persons, It is in your power to be useful, as long as there are any children in the world. That is the field in which you are to labour. Do not drive them away, because they are rude and noisy. Allow them to come near and speak to you, that you may speak to them. Gain their confidence, by listening to their tales and complaints, and then tell them of Jesus and His salvation. As the Divine Saviour of the world, He is the source and centre of an influence upon the human mind, which is felt everywhere, and will continue for ever. Everything connected with Christ is full of power, "whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Bring the hearts of children under the power and influence which proceed from Christ. Bind them to Him in their earliest years, by the "cords of a man," by the "bands of love,"—by all the chains and bonds which human nature can supply. In this way, modest and retiring, and even aged and helpless women, unseen and unknown by all but God, will bless their country, and help to fill the earth with millennial light and happiness.

Who ever read the history of Moses without being led to admire his character and exploits? His magnanimity in leaving the court of Egypt, because it was polluted by sin; his wisdom as a lawgiver; his gentleness as the ruler of a depraved and besotted people; his patriotism in living, not to aggrandize his family, but to benefit his nation; his communion with God; and the honour his

Maker put upon him; all fill us with admiration and delight. Yet how seldom do we advert to that silent, secret influence to which, under God, even Moses was so deeply indebted! He had a believing mother, who, by an overruling Providence, was also permitted to be his nurse; and it was under her instruction and treatment that he grew up to be such an illustrious example of all that is great and good. While, therefore, you admire the stateliness of this tree, the beauty of its leaves, and the abundance of its fruit, remember that it had a root; and that there was an influence at work, underground and out of sight, by which it was nourished and sustained.

If some women remain single, it is through the providence of God. He hath determined the bounds of our habitation. The condition of each is arranged by Him; whether it be higher or lower, solitary or social. We should, therefore, remember that our circumstances in the world were not fixed by any creature, and inquire what is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us. Some resemble Saul, the son of Kish, and are pleased when the doings of Providence happen to harmonize with our own passions, but become dissatisfied as soon as they cross our inclinations. His temper was placid, while appointed by God to be a King; but became fearfully ruffled, when superseded by another. It is wise in us to be equally satisfied with *all* that God does; since He never acts without a reason, and that reason is always one of grace and mercy, and

intended to promote the moral excellence and happiness of His redeemed creatures. In all situations His people are to feel—according to truth—that they are the subjects of moral government; and to be careful to act with propriety, like persons under restraint.

To a church which cultivates religion and morality among children, the agency of such Christian women is invaluable. In teaching the morals of the Gospel, especially to the young, they have no equal. They possess, in an eminent degree, the elements of usefulness and of popularity. By the gentleness of their manners, and their exuberant tenderness, they win the confidence of the young, and constrain even children to say to Christ, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Pious women are the best Leaders of preparatory or Catechumen classes. Nor let them think meanly of such an employment. When they are entrusted with the spiritual and religious interests of children and young people, let them remember that was an office conferred by Christ upon St. Peter himself, and is a dignity and an honour wherever it is bestowed. These children are regarded by the Lord Jesus Christ with distinguishing tenderness and deep solicitude. They are His property, dear to Him as His own life. Whoever may notice or whoever may neglect these under-shepherds, who attend to the lambs of the flock, let them rest assured that their labours are viewed with approbation by the Chief Shepherd; and, when He shall appear, they shall in no wise lose their reward.

“LOVEST THOU ME?”

FROM what passed between our Lord and St. Peter on one very memorable occasion, we may derive some information concerning the spirit and principle to which the Redeemer looks for the fulfilment of His gracious purposes respecting our children. He well knew that, whether they were committed to the care of Peter, or of any other person, His benevolent designs would not be executed unless these parties were first of all endued with a suitable temper and habit of mind. Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” and it was not till he replied, “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee,” that Jesus said to him, “Feed My lambs:” well knowing, it seems, that without this Divine principle he would never execute such a commission.

In human nature there are many other principles in operation, all of which are calculated, more or less, to benefit children. There is, for instance, the principle of natural affection. All parents love their children; but that principle, unaided and alone, will not secure the fulfilment of the Saviour’s designs. When a parent loves his offspring, but is, at the same time, wholly destitute of the love of Christ, the consequence is that he provides for them food and raiment, and such an education as is likely to advance them in the world; while their spiritual and eternal interests are neglected and forgotten.

There is also the commercial principle in extensive operation. Many persons undertake the education of children for the sake of gain. But if such teachers are strangers to the love of Christ, they may train their pupils into scholars, but will never make them Christians; and the designs of Christ will be defeated, rather than fulfilled.

There is also the political spirit at present in active operation. Patriots and civil rulers have undertaken the education of children, for the purpose of putting down social disorder and confusion, and promoting the order and happiness of the commonwealth. Such persons may do much good; but if they are destitute of the love of Christ, and if their plans have little or no reference to Him, the education they give will be miserably defective, and the children under their care will be deprived of an abundant blessedness provided for them by a gracious Redeemer.

Jesus Christ knew what was in man, and how far certain motives and principles would carry him in such a work as this; and He never for a moment looked to the working of any other principle but that of a fervent love to Himself, for the fulfilment of His wise and gracious designs. Truly Christian people have spiritual views; and they contemplate children in their relations to God and eternity. With them is the true doctrine of Christ, and they are able to feed the youthful mind with that knowledge and understanding which will lead to eternal happiness and salvation. Nothing but the

love of Christ will ever reconcile human beings to the toil, and drudgery, and expense involved in training children to holiness and heaven. St. Paul tells us what he did and suffered in order to bring adult sinners to God. He speaks of being "in labours more abundant." (2 Cor. xi. 23.) As to the principle by which he was actuated, he observes, "The love of Christ constraineth us." If we suppose that mere natural affection, or philanthropy, or love of country, or any motive lower than the love of Christ, in parents and others, is sufficient to induce them to bring children to true morality and happiness,—while we admit that the conversion of an adult can be effected only by the power of a higher principle,—we attempt to make a difference in cases which God assumes to be all alike. As adults and children are admitted into the same kingdom, so are they brought into it by the efforts of persons actuated by one and the same motive.

Jesus first said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" and then added, "Feed My lambs;" thus distinctly pointing out the only motive which would lead to the performance of this duty; and showing us that nothing but a burning love to Himself in the hearts of His people would ever enable them to fulfil His designs in reference to the lambs of His flock.

THE END.

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